

THE IMPACT OF TOURISM ON A NATURAL RESOURCE COMMUNITY:  
CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN CORTEZ, FLORIDA

By

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by

Michael Edward Jepson

For my sons John Michael and Kai and to my parents Leroy and Margaret I dedicate this work.

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The dissertation examines the impact of an increasing emphasis upon recreational tourism by state, regional and local governments on the fishing community of Cortez, Florida. Of particular interest is how resistance by fishermen toward increasing regulation on the water and the residents of the village toward increasing development on land influences the perception of who they are and affects their ability to stem the tide of an influential "growth machine."

The fast-paced growth of Florida's coastal counties has produced a demographic shift where once isolated, rural, working-class fishing communities are now surrounded by middle to upper middle class leisure and recreation communities. These newly established communities have decidedly different values concerning the nature of work, family, the environment and community. These differing values become apparent as

recreational fishing interest groups attempt to remove traditional fishing gear from state waters in the form of a "net ban."

Resistance for commercial fishermen reinforces a strong sense of independence and autonomy within their work and lives, yet it does not seem an acceptable image to the general public. The image of commercial fishermen that prevails during the media campaign to push the "net ban" initiative to a constitutional amendment has a significant impact on their fight over natural resources. While recreational fishing groups portrayed commercial fishermen as outlaws and destroyers of the resource, commercial fishermen and their families envisioned a different image more akin to Native Americans being pushed off their land.

The net ban campaign was successful and removed entanglement nets from state waters. It was a devastating defeat for commercial fishermen who have tried to regroup and have switched to other fisheries or sought other employment. Cortez, the community, has also regrouped, but the closure of two fish houses has brought into question the compatible use of waterfront property that could easily succumb to tourism and recreational development. Resistance continues to be mounted, but whether it can prevail will certainly be a key as to whether this community can retain some of the identity it has fashioned for over a century.



## CHAPTER 1 STRIP MALLS AND STRIPED MULLET

### **Introduction**

Coastal communities worldwide are experiencing a number of interdependent changes that often include rapidly growing populations, increasing regulation, degradation of local ecosystems and, in some cases, a complete collapse of important marine resources. Any one of these particular changes has the capability of initiating further change; together they may represent a severe threat to a community's sustainability and ability to endure.

This research will explore how the residents of one Southwest Central Florida fishing community have resisted threats to their occupation and traditional life ways as a result of an increasing emphasis upon recreational tourism within the state, which ultimately challenged their identity and the future sustainability of their community. The purpose of this research will be to characterize their resistance to change within the context of natural resource dependency. This work will provide insight into the processes that foster resistance and how it is viewed outside the community. In addition, it will provide an understanding of the important role identity plays in maintaining one's sense of place and belonging within a natural resource community and the contradictions that become apparent when change begins to reach further and further into traditional community life.

### **Coastal Waterfronts Trends**

Upward or downward shifts in population and the subsequent changes in the economic resource base have affected many natural resource dependent communities worldwide. The population growth rate for Florida's coastal counties has been increasing at a much faster rate than that for non-coastal counties. With this growing population there has been a shift in the demographic character of Florida's coastal communities, with many more elderly and retired individuals residing here full time and enjoying the moderate weather. Isolated rural communities like Cedar Key, which were once important commercial fishing centers, are now more dependent upon recreational fishing and tourism. Further south, the Key West waterfront, once a harbor for commercial fishing vessels, is now crowded with cruise terminals, tourist excursion boats, and charter fishing vessels. Rapid population growth along with the ebb and flow of seasonal residents and tourists seeking recreation along Florida's coasts has displaced commercial fishing operations from these former working waterfronts (Adams 1987; Adams et al. 1991).

Elsewhere, Vietnamese refugees entering inshore shrimp fisheries in Alabama and Texas have transformed southern coastal fishing communities. Oil and gas exploration in other parts of the Gulf have had impacts on the physical coast and the economies of coastal communities, both positive and negative. However, an underlying emphasis upon recreational tourism is always a part of the mix. Over the past 14 years I have reflected on these coastal trends and the impacts that have affected the fishing communities in which I have conducted research; the experience was instrumental in forming the focus of this research.

Over time, I have talked with countless fishermen and their families from Texas to North Carolina. Often it was business and a structured interview, other times it was casual and about the weather, inevitably it was about fish, fishing and being a fisherman. Born and raised in a small Midwestern-farming town, I could identify with an individual's attachment to the land—feeling a part of it as you cultivated, planted and harvested a crop. The fishermen I talked with expressed a similar commitment to their occupation and connection to their environment; some even thought of themselves as farming the sea. But, there was always more of an edginess in the way they spoke of fishing in comparison; it seemed more of a challenge, always a little more exciting and far more dangerous. It set them apart and made them seem different as they talked of work on the water and that unstable platform they considered their home away from home, their vessel—their boat. However, it was not only fishermen that afforded that distance, others also spoke of them as existing on the margins of society.

As I traveled from one fishing community to another, when I would mention that I was going to interview fishermen people would say, “Oh, they won’t talk to you! They don’t like strangers!” or “They don’t trust anyone.” Fishermen also would make similar comments about their counterparts living in another fishing community: “Oh, you don’t want to go down there. Those guys are not too keen on strangers. They can be pretty rough.” Nevertheless, I can honestly say they rarely lived up to that stereotype. Certainly, they were surly at times, and tough, and “macho,” but those seemed to be simple ground rules, a rough exterior that often masked a much more sincere and kinder individual.

I will always remember in 1985 as I conducted personal interviews in the town of Bayou La Batre, one shrimp boat captain had somehow avoided me all summer. I finally caught up with him as he was working on his boat toward the middle of August. I stood there explaining to him the survey research I was conducting and asked if he would be willing to participate. He glanced up at me with a mischievous smile and I knew something was about to happen. I turned in time to realize I was standing in front of the exhaust pipe of the generator motor upon which he had been working. I closed my eyes just in time as he punched the starter button, turning the engine over just enough to belch out a cloud of black smoke that quickly flew past my face. As his laughter subsided, I asked, "Will you do the interview?" He said, "Yeah, come on in my office." Similar pranks by fishermen, targeting other fishermen, were also common at the many docks I visited and seemed a customary test of perseverance. Nonetheless, I have invariably found fishermen easy to approach and easy to engage in conversation and, more often than not, for a much longer conversation than I anticipated.

The mystique and the stereotype that surround fishermen and their communities have always fascinated me. The often-repeated warning of "don't go there" was baffling as I continually found fishermen and their families to be contrary to what I was told. That is not to say that some were not rude and standoffish, but they were the exception, not the rule. And I must admit that on more than one occasion after a lengthy interview and constant reaffirmation that I was a graduate student conducting survey research, a fisherman would once again question whether or not I was really working with the IRS. Regardless, there seems to be a contradiction that continues to endure to this day about who fishermen are and how inviting their communities may be. I am not the first to

recognize this, as others like Acheson (1988) have found similar stereotypes and Gilmore (1990) has fittingly outlined both the positive and negative source and symbol of this meaningful image.

The essence of the fisherman stereotype is his claim to independence (Thomas et al. 1995). Acheson (1981) characterized the cross-cultural literature in which fishermen from around the world displayed this particular trait. In his ethnography of independent truckers, Agar (1986) suggests that there are similarities between truckers and commercial fishermen. Both are affected by the contradiction between cultural image and social reality, similar to that cultural icon of independence, the cowboy of the American West. The cowboy is the emblem of unrestrained personal freedom, a national theme according to Agar (1986:9). He had a special sense of justice, according to Bellah et al. (1985), who points out that it was difficult for him to fully belong to society, for to serve he must stand alone not depending on others and not submitting to their wishes (1985:146).

The identification with this symbolic image of the American West is ironic, for both truckers and fishermen are highly regulated and both are dependent upon others as they endeavor to fulfill their obligations of work; fishermen especially can become financially dependent upon fish house owners as they build up debt obligations for fishing gear and repairs. What is even more contradictory is that during research with fishing families in Florida prior to my dissertation fieldwork, it was not the cultural image of the cowboy and independence that was often being conjured up by those interviewed, but that of Native Americans and their historic demise. Fishermen saw themselves as being pushed off their reservation, just like Native Americans had in the

past. Furthermore, it was the image of outlaw that prevailed in the campaign by recreational fishing interests to remove traditional small-scale net gear from state waters (Smith and Jepson 1993). That contradiction between cultural image and social reality for fishermen and their community has been a recurring theme during much of the research in which I have participated.

In 1990, I was hired as Field Coordinator on a research project that was to examine the impact of increasing regulation on gill net fishermen and their families (Smith and Jepson 1993). Ninety-five in-depth interviews about the impact of regulations on their business and personal lives were conducted with fishing families around the state of Florida from 1990 through 1992. I arranged and conducted all interviews with the assistance of two different female interviewers over the course of the study. This research differed from most of my past experience in that interviews were conducted with both fisherman and partner. The first half of the interview was conducted with both together. In the second half of the interview, I interviewed the fisherman and the female interviewer the wife or partner. This provided an entirely different perspective on the business of fishing and provided me with new insight on the family life of fishermen. It was during this research that I became aware of the importance of independence not only to fishermen, but also as an important characteristic of fishing families.

It was also during the conduct of that research that I became acquainted with the community of Cortez. One of the immediate features that struck me as unique about this community was the relatively undisturbed working waterfront. Having visited many other fishing villages around the state, I had seen no other commercial fishing waterfront

that seemed so confined and with so little intrusion from recreational tourism. This was in spite of the community being surrounded by a sprawling coastal urban environment. In addition, Cortez showed a strong sense of kinship and unity that did not seem to be as openly present in other communities visited. These factors were important in my decision to select Cortez as my fieldwork site.

Originally, my research was to focus upon traditional or local knowledge of the environment. It was obvious from my previous work with shrimp fishermen and my experience with net fishermen in Florida that there was a distinct difference in how fishermen and marine scientists came to understand the same ecosystem. I intended to document fishermen's local knowledge and to explore their concept of conservation and folk models about the ecosystem in which they were so accustomed to working.

My interest in this subject led me to create a modified attitudinal scale based upon the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) that was used in two different surveys. One survey was a mail survey with recreational fishermen selected randomly from around the state; the other was conducted with commercial fishermen and their wives from the fishing family study previously mentioned. Results from these surveys will be discussed later.

My interest in the environmental context of fishing soon brought my attention to the concept of natural resource community. Rural sociologists whose focus was most often on terrestrial resources rather than marine resources have long studied natural resource dependent communities. Gale (1991) used the term Natural Resource Manufacturing and Administration (NR-MAN) coastal community in which the economic base revolves around the exploitation of water-based natural resources. Dyer

et al. (1992) used the more concise term of natural resource community. As most research shows, these types of communities differ markedly from other types of communities and are most often rural; their dependence upon natural resources exposes them to a number of economic challenges which other communities do not face. In addition, there is an important impact upon the social life of these communities. This was apparent in all fishing communities I have worked in, but was also an important part of my past growing up in a farming community.

In November 1991, I asked a retired Cortez commercial fisherman what he thought of my planned move to the village to conduct dissertation fieldwork. I explained that I was interested in spending time with commercial net fishermen to gain an understanding of their fishing methods and how they interacted with their environment. He thought it was a great idea but he had one request, "Just tell them the truth!" I was pleased that he was open to the idea and thought his comment to be interesting. I discuss this important comment later in Chapter 6.

I asked another active commercial fisherman his opinion of my wish to do dissertation fieldwork in the community and he, too, encouraged me to come there to live. He even offered a place to live at a greatly reduced rent, which was vital to my being able to live within the community as high rents were typical of the market in and outside the community. This is another common impact of a growing population and increased tourism along the coast. It is most often referred to as "gentrification," where coastal property becomes increasingly desirable and much more valuable (Gale 1991). The subsequent higher property value and rents often preclude younger fishing families from being able to own or rent property in their communities of origin. In addition, it has



forced commercial fishermen to change long established work habits or move to other locations away from the waterfront (Gale 1991; McGoodwin 1986).

Shortly after moving to the village I discussed the possibility of changing the focus of my research to tourism and its impact upon the community at the request of my advisor. I had recently become aware of plans to establish a maritime museum within the community and therefore I was very curious about this new area of research. Furthermore, I had witnessed concern by several community members over the impacts of expanding tourism within and around the community. It seemed an appropriate topic given the immediate context of events.

The recurring theme of contradictory image and changing identity for fishermen and their communities seemed even more relevant to this new area of research as a very negative image of commercial fishermen was being used over and over in the outdoor sections of local newspapers as recreational fishing interests were attempting to denigrate the commercial fishing industry. I felt in some ways this changing image could be linked to the growing emphasis upon tourism as outdoor writers were writing for a recreational fishing public who were often seasonal residents and tourists or at least of a different socio-economic class. The focus on the impact of tourism would later become even more important as the campaign to remove traditional fishing methods would consume this and many other commercial fishing communities.

After moving to Cortez, I began attending evening meetings of several community organizations: Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF), Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage (FISH), and the Seafood Festival Committee. Through my attendance

at these meetings I became familiar with most of those individuals who were active in community affairs.

Of particular interest were the activities of FISH, which was the organization that was spearheading the establishment of the maritime museum. I eventually became an officer of the organization and helped produce their first newsletter. In addition, I was instrumental in helping FISH secure a grant from the Florida Humanities Council in which I was a principal investigator along with another resident of the village. That individual was a photographer and architectural historian, in addition to being designated Director of FISH. His role for the grant was to photograph the individuals who were to be interviewed and some photographs were used for stations that were placed around the village. My participation and its implications are discussed further in the methodology section below.

I conducted thirty-five oral histories with residents of the community as part of that grant. In addition, and as a final product, several lectures were delivered in Sarasota and Manatee Counties describing the project and the outcome. As mentioned, one of the outcomes from the grant was a series of stations within the village that documented the traditional life ways and skills of the residents in this natural resource community. Each station consists of photographs and text describing a particular aspect of traditional life: work, music, food production, and local place names (Figure 1-1).

Another important organization within the community is the local chapter of Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF). I was an honorary member (my dues were paid by a local fish house) and I participated in several functions that raised money for that and other organizations within the community, such as the Seafood Festival and

community fish fries. The OFF meetings became an important venue for decision-making by the fishermen as to how they would fight the campaign to remove traditional gear from state waters. It was also an important source of information on management issues and was the one place where conflicts among fishermen were addressed openly in public. Meetings of the OFF often brought together two very different factions of



Figure 1-1. Station in front of Star Fish Co.

commercial fishermen in Cortez and provided for some very tense and sometimes raucous gatherings.

Although I was never formally a member, another important organization within the community is the Cortez Village Historical Society. Started by a former resident who remains as its leader, it became a vehicle for early resistance to development within the village. It was also the purveyor of a particular history of Cortez that was not shared by all Cortesians, which provided some impetus for the formation of FISH. A testament to its activism, but also to its division, there are probably few fishing communities, no less

unincorporated places, which have two local organizations dedicated to the historic preservation of the community and its traditional culture.

While I lived in Cortez I spent time on the docks and at the fish houses talking to fishermen and residents of the community on a daily basis. I expressed an interest in spending some time on the water and was offered the opportunity to go fishing with several fishermen during my stay. I participated in both the purse seine bait fishery and the small boat gill net fishery on several occasions, performing a limited but helpful role in each case. For a divergent perspective, I also contacted the Florida Marine Patrol and spent time on the water with a marine patrol officer as he made his rounds.

It became apparent that many Cortesians challenged the progression of change they confronted on a daily basis. In fact, it became obvious that they felt the need to develop resistance to several impending changes, i.e., the demolition of the local historic hotel, the proposed fixed span bridge to Anna Maria Island to replace the drawbridge, and the growing campaign to remove their traditional gear from state waters. All were challenges that brought into question: who they were, how they wanted to live their lives and what their future would be. These challenges, although not seemingly related to tourism directly, were connected and certainly related to the burgeoning population surrounding this community that was drawn to the climate and recreational opportunities.

Throughout the year there is an ebb and flow of seasonal residents and tourists which influences the pace of life and the make up of nearby communities. Within the community of Cortez there is also this seasonal fluctuation. The local economy of Bradenton and Manatee County thrives on these seasonal visitors and therefore the local

government tends to support the economic benefit they bring. Unfortunately, the growth that comes with such an economic boon is not always as welcome.

My experience in other areas of the Gulf of Mexico and my travels in Florida greatly influenced my choice to study the different facets of life for fishermen and their families in Cortez and the interconnectedness with tourism and growth. My many conversations with fishermen and their families reinforced the persistent themes I have mentioned that will be explored further in this research.

### **General Outline of Research**

This research will explore the perceived threats facing the commercial fishing village of Cortez in Southwest Central Florida that stem from the seemingly inevitable growth and change along its coast. It examines the impact of an increasing emphasis upon recreational tourism from state, regional and local government and how resistance within the community to the resulting change has influenced perceptions of identity both within and outside the community. Questions concerning the issue of social justice are also considered as the identity of the commercial sector of the fishing public is manipulated in a political battle over access to natural resources.

This community, like so many others that were first settled in a frontier environment, still holds onto the ideal of a simpler rural lifestyle, a lifestyle that seems in direct contrast to the urban sprawl and coastal change fueled by the growth of recreational tourism development along Florida's coasts. That same rural ideal has shaped the identity of this community and many of its longtime residents, an identity that is often as contradictory as is the belief in a rural lifestyle. It is also an identity that seems to shift between righteous individualist to outlaw in one instance and from

isolationist to integrationist in another. The willingness to hold on to any identity becomes important as the community faces the challenge of competing notions of who they are. These competing notions are often unflattering toward fishermen and their communities and are prevalent among urban Floridians and seasonal visitors to the state who are unfamiliar with the rural and often isolated fishing community.

Various forms of resistance to modernity, such as social protest and illicit fishing techniques, have evolved over time within Cortez. Serious threats to their occupation, community, and cultural heritage have forced these residents to engage in a number of strategies to resist pressures that stem from high impact government projects, commercial development, increasing regulation of fisheries, and attempts to abolish traditional fishing practices. They have resisted change by organizing formal challenges to both private and government interests at the local, state, and federal level. Yet, they have also acquired resources from and enlisted the services of those very same governmental agencies to assist them in their challenges.

Another, more informal, resistance is generally hidden from the majority of residents and others. That resistance comes through daily challenges to increased competition and fisheries' regulations through illicit fishing techniques on the water, away from the larger landlocked community. This latter form of resistance is associated with feelings of independence and defiance that have helped fashion an identity that commercial fishermen have traditionally cultivated and most recently have tried to modify, the image of outlaw. Their antagonists throughout the campaign to disallow the use of entanglement gill nets in state waters used that image effectively against them.

Both the formal and informal resistances were more successful in the past, but recent events have shaped a new political ecology and political economy that challenge fishermen's sense of place. In the early years of fishery management, state and federal agencies relied on commercial fishermen for data collection and assessments of the stock. The more recent trend is toward independent sampling and reliance upon complex scientific modeling. Their ability to influence the political arena has also diminished over the years as they have become outnumbered, both on the water and land, by a much more affluent and better educated sector of recreational fishing public. With fewer skills and far fewer financial resources, commercial fishermen and their families were unable to sway public opinion against a very polished media campaign to remove their traditional gear from state waters.

This research examines the two forms of resistance that have been employed to challenge the many intrusions facing this community: 1) the formal and more public resistance within the bureaucratic and political arena; and 2) the informal and everyday cultural resistance on the water. In general, both men and women participated in the more formal forms of resistance: women through their organizational skills and writing capabilities, men through their efforts of political lobbying. Men, on the other hand, participated solely in the everyday resistance on the water through illicit fishing methods.

It is difficult to address these matters as they can have serious implications for those who have participated; however, this activity is critical to the discussion of resistance. My discussion of illegal activity will be done in such a manner so as to avoid incriminating anyone. I discuss this issue at further length in the methodology section.

As they have organized support for their occupation, community, and cultural heritage, commercial fishermen and their families have found themselves questioning their role and identity within their own society. The time-honored values of hard work and strong kinship ties seem archaic in a society that struggles to accept rapid change and increased mobility. Their survival rests with their ability to find a voice as a rapidly growing population, often with competing goals, continues to encroach upon their community and sense of place.

It is this contradictory relationship between this community and its changing landscape that is explored through an analysis of the village's activities during one of their most critical challenges, the campaign to ban entanglement nets in state waters. That fight to maintain their traditional fishing method forced them to reflect upon their occupation, community, sense of place and identity. All are inextricably tied together and form a focal point as various individuals and groups worked to hold on to fleeting images of times past, tried to maintain a contradictory rural lifestyle, and anticipated an uncertain future.

### **Methodology**

I hesitate to call this research eclectic in its theoretical approach although it does draw upon several theories of human behavior and thought. My training as an anthropologist began with a strong emphasis in materialist theory and quantitative methods. It has since been molded into a more ecological perspective, but has been influenced by economic anthropology and community studies and an increasing utilization of qualitative methodology. I do tend to be eclectic in my approach to solving problems in the sense that you need to use what works. Harris (1979) has said that



eclecticism leads to "perpetual scientific disaster: middle-range theories, contradictory theories, and unparsimonious theories without end" (1979:288). However, the strength of eclecticism is its broad approach, its "interdisciplinary focus." Cultural materialism or any other theoretical perspective may have too narrow a focus and might miss the intersystem relationships while focusing on the intrasystem relationships (Garbarino 1992:15). This is not a criticism of the Cultural Materialist approach as it would be very appropriate as there are important infrastructural mechanisms, the interface between the environment and technology, which influence the community and the occupation. Yet, because this is an initial exploration a more inductive approach utilizing participant observation may be suitable. Attempting to gather quantitative data through surveys may be too cumbersome and miss subtle relationships within the community.

It is my intention to illuminate the interrelationship between various components of this particular cultural system within this natural resource community and examine their influence upon its residents. Specifically, I intend to draw attention to how people within a natural resource community adapt to and resist change given the many different resources they have at hand.

This study is descriptive and does not emphasize any one theoretical perspective. However, it draws upon a body of work from several fields including community science and community development; political economy and ecology; ecological anthropology; cultural resistance and tourism. Each of these fields provides an important perspective that is significant in forging a more holistic understanding of this community and how it has adapted to change. Although this may be one case study and is limited by both time and place, I believe that further research with this perspective can inform the body of

literature on natural resource community and community development with a particular emphasis upon tourism and coastal change.

Methodologically, this research relies on ethnographic methods of participant observation and key informant interviews as the primary means of data collection. I spent a great deal of time assisting the director of the Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage (FISH) who was working on several projects within the village. This entailed meeting with various different groups within the county and local area to locate support for the proposed maritime center. We conducted a census of historic structures as part of the proposed National Register nomination and prepared several proposals to fund a variety of projects to document folk life in the village. In addition, I also spent time hanging out at fish houses, attending meetings and participating in village events and going out on a few fishing boats. I would take field notes either during or after such events depending upon the nature of the undertaking. I was also able to obtain minutes of meetings for the Organized Fishermen of Florida that I was unable to attend and therefore had records of some events where I was not present. Archive material from local libraries and local historical organizations were also obtained when available. As part of a Florida Humanities Council grant that was awarded to FISH with me as one of the principal investigators, I conducted thirty-five oral histories with village residents, some of which were transcribed through word processing and both electronic and paper copies were archived in the village. The interview schedule used while conducting those interviews is included in Appendix A. Additionally, I was invited to spend time at many family gatherings to enjoy some very good home-cooking and engage in long discussions with my hosts about fishing and village life, both past and present.

Although it is primarily qualitative in its approach, quantitative data are presented where and when needed. Demographic and landings data provided by government agencies are used to provide context and perspective on growth and change for Florida, Manatee County and Cortez. In addition, survey data collected from recreational and commercial fishermen are examined to explore questions of opinion and attitude about the environment. A scale I created by modifying the New Environmental Paradigm Scale to reflect an emphasis upon the marine environment was added to two different surveys conducted with two different populations of Florida residents and is presented in Chapter 6 where a comparison of responses to items in the scale is discussed.

The time between my fieldwork and the completion of this dissertation has spanned a time period much longer than anticipated. For some perspective I have presented in Table 1-1 a timeline which chronicles some of the important events in the history of Cortez including my own arrival and departure. Since leaving the village of Cortez there have been several important achievements and events that do not appear on the timeline. In early chapters I describe Cortez as it existed prior to the net ban in order to give some perspective on the important changes which followed that significant event. In the Epilogue and Conclusion chapter important changes after the net ban amendment, such as changes in seafood landings and noteworthy changes within the organizations active in preserving the village are presented to assess the impact of the amendment.

As James Spradley has said, as ethnographers we must "deal with three fundamental aspects of human experience: what people do, what people know, and the things people make and use" (Spradley 1980:5). I would add to that and suggest we must also deal with where people live.

Table 1-1. Events Timeline

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1879	Arrival of North Carolina fishermen to Hunters Point (later named Cortez)
1888	Cortez Post Office opens
1920s	Stop-netting introduced
	1921 Hurricane
	Neriah Taylor establishes boat building operation
1930s	Depression
1940s	Tink Fulford builds fish house
1950s	Legislature outlaws stop netting
	Outboard motors introduced
1960s	Local ordinances appear that outlaw fishing in subdivision canals
	Nylon nets introduced
	Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF) is created
1970s	"Kicker" boats introduced
	Blue Fulford becomes president of OFF
	Drug smuggling is at its peak
	First resistance to condominium development
1980s	Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC) created
	Cortez designated historic village by County
	Florida Conservation Association formed
	Cortez Village Historical Society (CVHS) formed
	Resistance to Chris Craft marina successful
	1 <sup>st</sup> annual Cortez seafood festival
1991	Coast Guard razes historic Albion Inn
	Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage (FISH) formed
1992	Cortez Maritime Center plans developed
	Cortez fieldwork begins in January
	Cortez Bridge removed from five year plan in February.
	Save our Sealife campaign begins to collect signatures for ballot referendum
	Professional Fisheries Conservation Coalition (PFCC) formed in December
1993	Save our Seafood campaign initiated by OFF in January
	Save our Sealife campaign collects enough signatures for ballot referendum
	Cortez fieldwork ends in July
1994	Peter Matthiessen visits Cortez in September
	Net Ban forum held at University of Florida on November 3 <sup>rd</sup>
	Net Ban Amendment passes November 8 <sup>th</sup>
1995	Hired by South Atlantic Fishery Management council
	Cortez listed as National Historic District
	Net ban becomes effective in July
1998	Hired Florida Fishing Communities project
1999	Cortez designated Waterfronts Florida community
2004	Dissertation Defense

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Certainly, the context in which people do the things they do, what they know and the objects they make and use are important aspects of any ethnography. Those who rely upon natural resources for their livelihood are inextricably tied to a particular place or a particular type of place. When that place, landscape or environment begins to change, there is set in motion a process of adaptation that may ignore, embrace or resist that change. Because natural resources are in a continuous state of fluctuation, residents of natural resource-dependent communities are often adapting to resource availability and seasonal variations which make adapting to change part of their daily lives. But when those changes become as intrusive as to threaten an individual's livelihood and force one to question one's own identity, as with the net ban campaign, resistance should not be unexpected. However, resistance for individuals who live in natural resource communities may be more than a reaction to certain circumstances; it may be an integral part of their culture. Therefore, acts of resistance become adapted to the circumstances and are not newly adopted forms of behavior.

Overall, this research is what Agar calls, "an exploration into humanscapes," finding out where people live, who they are and how they live (Agar 1986:12). It is intended to show the interrelationship among resistance to change, reliance upon natural resources and identity. In doing so, it is proposed that this research will provide a unique perspective that builds upon previous research within each of these fields by identifying the important links between them. Furthermore, it is hoped that this research will also complement other anthropological and related research conducted among fishermen and their communities in the United States and other parts of the world.

### Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 provides a review of a wide range of literature on community, tourism, political economy and ecology, social justice and cultural resistance. Furthermore, articles that tie several of these themes together are included to help emphasize the relationship among these different topics and their connectedness. The community literature covers topics such as defining community, the role of place and place attachment, with a special emphasis upon natural resource dependent communities. The next area of interest examines the larger issue of tourism and its impact worldwide, including case examples of the more immediate impact upon coastal communities that are often tourist destinations and may have particular ties to fishing. Included in the literature on political economy and ecology are several case studies of power struggles that come with economic and ecological change. These articles illustrate the impact of growth and the economic power that it can generate. Furthermore, specific examples of the power struggles that ensue over ecological change and the importance of knowledge and how that knowledge is defined are included to help demonstrate the similarities between these case examples and Cortez.

Both the natural environment and social environment are the subjects of Chapter 3. The important ecosystems along Florida's coast that provide habitat for those species of fish essential to both the commercial and recreational sectors are described. Of particular importance are descriptions of Sarasota Bay and the important habitat and fish species in that local ecosystem that surrounds Cortez. A brief history and discussion of marine fisheries regulation are also integrated into this discussion. The social environment is described using demographics for the state, the county and Cortez. Key

indicators of change, like population and other data from both the historic and more recent census, are included. Much of the data in this chapter relate to Cortez prior to the net ban. More recent data are presented in Chapter 7 in the conclusion.

A condensed history of Cortez is provided in Chapter 4 that traces the area's development from prehistory to the present. The historical fishing endeavors by Timucuans and Tocabago to the Cubans and finally to the North Carolina immigrants is chronicled in this chapter. Early descriptions of tourists and tourism are also included. The majority of the village history is derived from two local histories that have been published and oral histories conducted by me during my time in the village.

Chapter 5 describes the culture within a natural resource community. A description of the inshore net fishery provides a closer look at the everyday life and the seasonal round of the small-scale gill net fisherman. Descriptions of boats, gear and methods of fishing are included along with how fishermen develop traditional skills and utilize space. Through the use of informant mapping I describe commonly known fishing locations, each with its own history and lore. Related to that is a discussion of local knowledge of the environment and its utility. Finally, the chapter contains a discussion of the kinship ties within the community and how some areas become designated as sacred because of their association with kin and/or events that are important to the folkways of a fishing community.

There are three critical areas that I explore in Chapter 6. The first is the importance of image and how both commercial fishermen and their detractors use image to help define their identity and the identity of others. The second is class and power and how it differs among those who are working class and those who are not. Included is a

discussion of how different views of knowledge and science can further differentiate between them. The chapter concludes with a discussion of both the formal and informal resistance that I found in Cortez and the important consequences that resistance can have in the face of change.

In Chapter 7, the Epilogue and Conclusion, I examine how tourism, through its subtle and not so subtle ways, has affected each of the key facets of culture and social interaction in this natural resource community. The successful campaign to remove nets from state waters and its impact are discussed, with events just prior to the vote on the ballot initiative shortly after my leaving the village of Cortez of particular interest. Finally, an examination of mitigation by the state is also reported with a discussion of the only pre-net ban/post-net ban research conducted among fishermen and their families (Smith et al. 2003).

### **Anthropological Fieldwork and Advocacy**

One common problem that anthropologists face as they conduct fieldwork is their own involvement in their research. The very nature of ethnography lends itself to a whole host of problems and issues that have caused a critique of the very nature of the enterprise and discipline (Marcus and Fisher 1986). However, anthropologists have long recognized the difficulties of working and living among those who they study and the implications of living in another culture (Powdermaker 1966).

I became much more involved in many different village activities once accepted as a member of the community. As mentioned before, I was an active member of the organization FISH. I became secretary, developed their first newsletter, and was involved in grant writing and working on grants. I served on the Seafood Festival



committee and worked the festival. I was going out on boats with the fishermen of the village. Moreover, I attended family gatherings and celebrations and became a regular fixture at a couple of households. These are necessary measures for participant observation and ethnography. Even so, it is hard to separate your life from your research when you become so closely involved with the people you study. I have made some lifelong friends during the course of this research. I worked hard to help them realize some of their ideas for a better community. In some cases, we were successful and in others, we were not. I have chosen not use pseudonyms, as many people in the village are eager to see what I have written. I have tried to protect identities but most of those who are knowledgeable will be able to discern an individual's character from the context. I hope that I have not offended anyone, as it was not my intention to do so. Although my participation may have influenced my research, my involvement also provided me with unparalleled access to a way of life that would not be accessible otherwise. I was accepted as part of the community, but my status as outsider allowed me to gain the confidence of many different factions within the community. Most community members considered my work and research to be a benefit for the community and not so much as an advocate for the commercial fishing industry.

My involvement and close association with the community of Cortez included taking part in their resistance to the net ban campaign. I chose to do so not because I was a resident in their community or friend to so many, I did so because I considered the proposed amendment to be bad policy for fisheries management and a social injustice. I wrote editorials against the campaign to ban nets and was instrumental in bringing Peter Matthiessen to Cortez to speak against the net ban. After leaving the village, I continued

to write editorials in the local paper and was also active in organizing a forum on the issue at the University of Florida.

Although I did not support the net ban and was a vocal opponent, I tried to make my argument as balanced as possible. In many letters to the editor, I tried to point out the discrepancy in many arguments for the net ban and tried to present information to support my argument. Nevertheless, I was marked as an opponent to the net ban, a position that was questioned later when the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council decided to interview me for a position on their staff. During my interview, I explained how I considered such a policy a bad precedent for managing fisheries, as the political nature of such an amendment did not allow for impartial debate over the issues. Furthermore, I anticipated that the commercial fishing industry would suffer a social injustice as a result. It seems my response was acceptable because the council hired me and I served on the staff for four years.

The ideal of objectivity is a difficult one to achieve and some have raised the question as to whether it is achievable at all (Bernard 1988). Yet, striving to be as objective as possible may be all we can do. However, presenting all sides of an issue like the net ban is almost impossible. Therefore, presenting a subjective look of one perspective while recognizing other views is what I have attempted. All in all, I believe my stance against the net ban was a subjective one and not one of bias.

I have tried to present these people and their community in a fair and unbiased fashion, yet my own ties to the community places me in a position that makes it difficult to be critical. In the end, I hope that I have been able to provide a piece of research that may be subjective in its approach, but provides a viewpoint that otherwise would not be

heard. As an anthropologist, I believe it is critical to our discipline to be able to provide these subjective looks at a culture and offer them for critique. We may then decide the validity of the view presented, but most importantly, we offer a forum for those voices that we do not always hear.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CULTURAL CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY, CHANGE, IDENTITY AND RESISTANCE

In his essay, "Land and Word: American Pastoral," William Howarth (1995) describes a common theme of pastoralism in American literature in which many writers describe a peaceful and comforting countryside and long for a less complicated rural way of life. He further conveys the contradiction that is often found between embracing modernity and holding to this ideal of a simpler rural existence. He points out that Americans, throughout their history, have held onto the myth of an agrarian lifestyle. Yet, by rapidly modifying the landscape through migration, urban growth, and technological change, Americans have transformed their land into something other than the pastoral paradise so commonly coveted in the literature. Nonetheless, the sense that America is "Nature's nation" continues today with an increasing number of those who identify with the environment, the landscape, and long for that simpler rural life. A rural life that purportedly offers serenity and calm, in sharp contrast to the more common hectic urban existence lived by the majority of Americans.

This longing for a "place" and the surrounding landscape is understandable considering that as one grows up in a particular geographical locale one becomes familiar with the place names and stories about those who came before. Those names and stories later become the legend, the myth, the history and part of the memory of that "place." The idea that we have a "place" within the landscape with which we identify, provides a certain security that we belong somewhere. Longing for that place is often a longing for

the past; a past that might seem a simpler more pleasant life, in light of the fact that most of us have chosen a more itinerant lifestyle in a decidedly less rural environment.

The idea that we can attribute a "sense of community" to a specific geographical locale and pattern of settlement has been an enduring viewpoint within the social sciences. Redfield's (1947) "folk society" and Wirth's (1938) "urbanism as a way of life" are early examples that have generated considerable debate over attributing life-style characteristics to a rural or urban way of life (Summers and Branch 1984). These early attempts to determine how people live by where they live have been challenged as the rural-urban continuum has become much less distinct and a "sense of community" can be found at both ends of the continuum. However, Summers and Branch do point out that "territorially bounded populations do manifest measurably different life-styles" which are important with regard to how they adapt to change (1984:158).

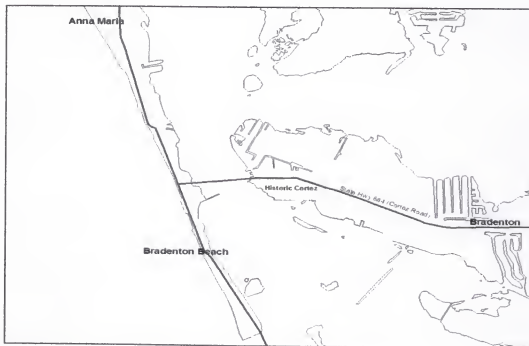


Figure 2-1. Cortez, Florida and Surrounding Communities.

Cortez survives in that transitional place where urban and rural have assimilated and where sea meets land. The spread of fast developing growth from Bradenton is obscuring the division that once separated Cortez from the rest of the metropolitan area (Figure 2-1). The many strip malls and businesses along Cortez Road are an indication of the growing reality that few beachgoers today are aware that the road they travel is named after the fishing village that was formerly the destination.

The community of Cortez, like so many others that were first settled in a frontier environment, still conveys the ideal of a simpler rural lifestyle; a lifestyle that seems in direct contrast to the urban sprawl and coastal change that is largely fueled by tourism development along Florida's coasts. That same rural ideal has shaped the identity of this community and many of its longtime residents, an identity that is often as contradictory as is the belief in a rural lifestyle that may no longer exist.

Important questions emerge from Howarth's (1995) essay concerning the contradiction of seeking a pastoral life and the reality of a rapidly changing and, more often than not, urban life. Questions such as: What is community today and how does it compare to community of the past? If the rich are searching for a pastoral lifestyle, what happens when they find it, or try to recreate it, in areas populated by those who have traditionally resided in rural areas and are not rich? What happens when these two different groups come together and how do these differing perspectives of a pastoral life contribute to the potential for conflict?

These questions are important because the definition of rural has changed. It has been defined, for some time, in contrast to what it is not—urban. The dividing line between what is rural and what is urban has become much less clear as they become less

geographically discrete. Furthermore, the concept of community has changed and the traditional view of a small, close-knit, cohesive community with shared values may not be as pervasive as it once was. Finally, the life-style associated with such communities has also changed as those in rural areas engage in similar consumption patterns as the larger society regarding dress, leisure, eating and shopping habits (Fitchen 1991).

Many issues permeate and surround the question of what defines a community today, especially in Florida and especially for coastal communities. They include tourism, political economy and ecology, social justice, cultural resistance and identity. I attempt to tie these themes together by emphasizing the relationship among these different topics and their connectedness. Because each topical areas has an abundance of its own theoretical literature, I have chosen material to reflect that which is most relevant to the task of blending these different themes in the context of what has taken place in Cortez. I begin with a discussion of what "community" means and the recent debate that has surrounded the changing notion of the term.

### **What is Community?**

The question "What is Community?" is important since it could be argued that the Cortez of today is not a community in the traditional sense. Some might say that it has become incorporated within the Bradenton-Sarasota metropolitan area; as its own political unit, it does not exist. It is not an incorporated municipality and its governance falls under county jurisdiction and decisions concerning zoning and essential services are determined by the Manatee County Commission. Although it is defined as a Census Designated Place, its population of over 4,000 includes many individuals that the majority of Cortesians would not consider part of their community. Therefore, it seems

necessary to examine how community is defined and under what circumstances does Cortez meet the criteria of community.

The term community has become ubiquitous throughout not only the social science literature, but also throughout that of the natural sciences (Lumpen Society 1997). With such common usage, a widely accepted definition of the term would seem likely. However, a debate such as that over the virtues of a liberal concept of community versus the communitarian concept attest to the numerous variations in defining community, as well as, the moral assumptions that may come with the use of any individual definition (Etzioni 1996; Silk 1999; Smith 1999; Tisdell 1997). The debate is important because it underlines pivotal assumptions about how community might be defined and how individuals view and construct their community. The communitarian community is a geographical place in which individuals have close ties and daily face-to-face interaction. The liberal community, on the other hand, is not necessarily confined to a specific locale and interaction between members can take place over the internet. In addition, the debate brings into question how attached people are to a geographic locale in today's society, given the increased mobility that has come with advances in transportation and increasing prosperity with the global economy.

Today's job seekers, retirees, and others are more than willing to give up their natal homes and seek community elsewhere. In doing so, they give up a certain security or familiarity that comes with their traditional residence. On the other hand, they may welcome a new and different social network, especially if they felt constrained or oppressed by the old. In any case, new social networks and relationships must be formed when establishing community in another locale. Community attachment is no longer a



product of long associations with extended kin and friends spread over a familiar geographic area, but formed with others who have similar interests and are recent acquaintances in an unfamiliar landscape. These new communities of association and choice championed by the liberal theorists have transformed the backdrop of community research and fuel an ongoing debate over the future state of community (Brint 2001).

The idea that community is in decline seems to be a widely held belief and is the impetus for the continued debate over its constitution. The decline is most often ascribed to what might be called the "traditional" form of community, or community of place. The recent discussion between the communitarian and liberal theorists focuses on the impact of increasing individual rights and its effect upon society and community over the past several decades. As stated earlier, for communitarians, community is more place-based and family oriented, dependent upon the face-to-face interaction on a daily basis. For liberal theorists, community can be formed by individuals seeking "communities of choice," which are not necessarily place-based and may include virtual communities, or those that are based on association rather than face-to-face interaction (Silk 1999; Smith 1999). In general, communitarians tend to reinforce boundaries around communities, while the liberal theorist supports the free movement in and out of community boundaries.

Etzioni (1996) claims that increased emphasis upon individual rights has slowly eroded the basis for community allowing for less accountability by individuals toward society and the common good. Some have pointed out the moral assumptions imbedded within the communitarian argument, that community in and of itself has a beneficial moral quality in any state (Smith, D.M. 1999; Tisdell 1997). That moral quality is

subject to dispute as liberal theorists point to historical forms of oppression within traditional communities (Silk 1999; Smith, D.M. 1999). Without increased individual rights, communities could and have maintained structural inequalities and oppressive policies toward minorities and others (Smith, D.M. 1999). Finally, Bellah et al. (1985) summarize well the conflict within American society with its strong sense of individualism and the ongoing struggle with a sense of commitment to the larger society, the dialectic of private and public life.

Champlin (1997) maintains that there has been a long history of the idea that the liberal view of community fits well into *laissez faire* economics. The liberal ideal seems to conclude that the best way to restore community is for individuals working in their own interests to produce the "most efficient and prosperous economy...the most civil and coherent community" (Champlin 1997:575). Champlin contends that the liberal view is flawed and cannot restore community. He emphasizes the need to form a common ground and unity within community, traits which the liberal ideal cannot attain as it divides rather than unifies with its emphasis on the individual and volunteerism (Champlin 1997).

Although there is validity to both arguments the debate has prompted some to steer away from either view of community in order to resolve the impasse. The argument over what is community has been criticized for focusing on too narrow a debate over a non-existent idyllic form and/or the deconstruction of that form (Lumpen Society 1997). Furthermore, recent calls to restore community seem flawed as long as there is an attempt to recreate that idyllic form which no longer exists. It is maintained that community is process: community is art and citizens are artists or the vice versa, both dependent upon

one another. What evolves is an ever-changing expression of community (Lumpen Society 1997).

Whatever the form or expression of community, important distinctions are made between the two ends of the continuum. Although they may share many characteristics, communities of association do not have the close attachment to a geographical locale nor the intimate knowledge of the landscape that comes from the long-term association found in traditional place-based communities. Those who live in communities of association may place their loyalties elsewhere, like their natal homes to which they still feel some sentimental ties. Their commitment to their new settlement may be solely to protect a monetary investment, rather than a heritage. Traditional place-based communities, on the other hand, do not allow easy movement across boundaries and can be stifling by requiring conformity to an arcane way of life or mores associated with it.

When Wilkinson (1991) reviewed community definitions he found three critical elements that were common in most "conventional" definitions: a) a locality, or where people live and meet their daily needs; b) a local society, that emerges where people strive to meet common needs and express common interests; and c) a process of locality-oriented collective actions that is a mechanism to express mutual interests in the local society that are not driven by self-interest, but rather are for the good of the local society. Wilkinson sees locality as extremely important for a definition of community, especially when considering rural communities. He emphasizes the importance of locality in providing a place for social interaction that builds identity and meaning for individuals over time. However, it is the interactions that define that territory, not the reverse (Wilkinson 1991).

Territory is important for most communities, but for communities like Cortez that are dependent upon natural resources it has particular importance. Fishing communities are especially tied to their locality because of the safe harbor often afforded the fleet and its proximity to the resource. There is also a certain awareness of the landscape and seascape that become a necessary part of traditional knowledge of local fishermen. That knowledge, passed down from generation to generation becomes linked to other facets of community that also play an important role in its definition. There is a legacy that ties together both the local geography and occupational tradition (Flora et al. 1992).

In a broader examination of the symbols of community, Goudy's (1990) study of community attachment of fairly homogeneous regions showed substantial difference in community attachment that was strongly related to length of residence, age and income. Surprisingly, population size and density were weakly correlated to community attachment (Goudy 1990). Brown (1993) discovered that community satisfaction and attachment are not strongly related to local economic or demographic characteristics. In his study of two rural Missouri communities, he found that participation in the larger consumer economy has lessened the importance of in-shopping, local employment and other variables previously thought to be important to community attachment and satisfaction. In fact, those who work outside the study communities were the most satisfied. These findings, along with others (Pinkerton et al. 1995), suggest a greater than ever impact on rural communities with regard to participation in a consumer economy and the changing functions within the local community. Further research and development efforts may need to focus the changing role of place as a positive

community experience and change in certain functions of social life within rural communities (Brown 1993).

It is this attachment to place that becomes essential for defining community for Hay (1998). Examining residents' rooted sense of place, Hay sees a changing perception of community that is tied directly to modernization and an increasingly mobile society. For community to survive, that rooted sense of place needs to be restored to allow for the necessary moral and ethical relationships to develop between sustainable communities and their resources (Hay 1998).

Platt (1991) goes further to emphasize the important role that place has for identity formation, even for those who have left their natal homes. While she suggests that community is no longer defined only by residence, "place becomes both a portable and necessary symbol of identity for those who leave and a valuable form of symbolic capital for those who stay" (1991:106).

Attachment to place is certainly an important part of any "sense of community." However, it seems evident that certain behavior that once was considered part of that attachment like shopping or working within the community, may no longer need to be considered requisite. Yet, for the "sense of community" to survive it seems obvious that residents must exhibit some attachment to place through other symbolic behaviors to establish those moral and ethical relationships to which Hay (1998) refers.

This is significant with regard to natural resource communities and fishing communities like Cortez. There is a strong feeling of sense of place in Cortez and tied to that are important moral and ethical relationships. Those morals and ethics are rooted in a more traditional and somewhat rural culture; one that stresses hard work, strong ties to

extended family and a deep-seated belief in the ability of God or Mother Nature to take care of herself thereby providing the necessary balance between fish and fisherman for a sustainable stock.

The urban-rural continuum is important to consider because Cortez is perceived by residents to be rural in its character. Although a blurring of the line between the rural-urban continuum was mentioned previously, Bell (1992) has found that it is still a viable concept and provides an important source for identity for those living in the country. Furthermore, Bradshaw (1993) sees the rural-urban continuum as having significant importance for the rural development paradigm as the global economy redefines cities and creates rural regions. He emphasizes the need to form multi-jurisdictional networks where several rural communities may work together to solve problems that could not be resolved alone (Bradshaw 1993).

The continued growth of urban areas has had significant impact upon rural communities. Previous assumptions about many characteristics of rural communities have changed as behaviors, attitudes and perceptions of those living in rural communities are also transformed with a global economy and an ever-changing landscape. This has important implications for rural development as mentioned previously. Wilkinson (1986) sees rurality as an important challenge to community development in that preserving a community's rurality should be paramount.

Overall, the above literature suggests a changing form and perception of community that finds traditional place-based communities struggling to survive. The debate over the communitarian and liberal theories of community focuses upon an important difference between the two forms that is germane to Cortez and it

surroundings. Cortez is very much a place-based and traditional community with a decidedly rural character. It is increasingly surrounded, however, by communities of choice and association, of urban character, which include both retirement and destination communities.

Wilkinson's (1991) community is an ecological community that is place-based and is compatible with most definitions of natural resource dependent communities, like Cortez. It does not necessarily contrast with communities of choice, but feelings of attachment to communities of choice are derived from an entirely different process. The key here is the important link to the environment that is found with communities that are dependent upon natural resources and how that link is tied to a sense of community and attachment to place. These communities are place-based and also have long histories of resource extraction creating a legacy that influences the identity and social life of its residents.

### **Natural Resource-Dependent Communities**

With the exception of modern planned communities, most communities were dependent upon natural resources early in their development. In the United States the industrial revolution brought about a rather marked change as urban areas grew and became more focused upon manufacturing and servicing markets leaving fewer communities directly dependent upon extraction of natural resources. Nevertheless, there are many that continue to depend upon agriculture, forestry, mining and fishing.

Natural resource-dependent communities are typified by large fluctuations in economic prosperity. This is partially due to the fact that the availability of the resource itself is naturally cyclical, especially for fishing communities. These may be seasonal variations in resource availability or may be longer-term fluctuations due to

environmental or man-made calamity. In either case, the community must endure the absence of important economic resources as a result. These fluctuations of prosperity among natural resource dependent communities have often generated high rates of poverty, which tend to confine residents, in that the lack of resources offers few options for leaving (Freudenburg and Gramling 1994; Nord 1994; Peluso et al. 1994). Krannich and Zollinger (1997) created a typology of resource-dependent areas based upon observed patterns of resource-based economic activity. The four typologies: sustained, cyclical, transitional, and declining, exhibit the multifaceted nature of resource dependent areas and important differences in the development potential for each type (Krannich and Zollinger, 1997). In their study of seven resource-dependent communities, Force et al. (2000) found that it was broad societal trends followed by local historical events that explained most of the variation in dimensions of community social change such as size and structure. Overall, local resource production explained little when combined with other "engines of change."

Gale (1991) also developed a classification scheme to sort out the various types of resource dependent coastal communities and to understand the impacts of the "growth machine." The classification, Natural Resource Manufacturing and Administration (NR-MAN) coastal community, in which the economic base revolves around the exploitation of water-based natural resources is an apt description of the category of coastal community that Cortez would exemplify. Especially noteworthy to Gale's discussion is the impact of "gentrification" as when a "second-generation growth machine" appears within coastal communities. Often made up of nonlocals and having stronger links to external capital markets, this new growth machine tends to disrupt the old power



structure and displaces established, less powerful residents. This coastal gentrification is typical along the United States coast and has the potential to transform a NR-MAN community's dependence to an entirely different resource base, thereby displacing commercial fishermen.

Dyer et al. (1992) define a natural resource community as one where there is "a population of individuals living within a bounded area whose primary cultural existence is based upon the utilization of renewable natural resources." These communities have a necessary link between biological cycles within the physical environment and socio-economic interactions within the community. Important social activities or events may be tied to the migration patterns or seasonal harvest of resources.

Initially, there was a bias toward land-based investigations into communities and natural resources (Harris and Vanderpool 1992). But that changed as more and more people became interested in the environment and began looking at the ocean and its watery resources as an important part of the ecology of the planet. For fishermen in particular, adaptation to working on the water has important implications (Acheson 1981; Norr and Norr 1978). Long periods of time away from home and working on an unstable platform are two aspects of fishing that differ from most land-based occupations. Furthermore, there are the necessary support activities that take place on land to support the activity on the water. The important ties to the physical environment dictate occupational participation, structures community interaction and define social values for those living in natural resource communities. Unlike other communities, like communities of association, social life within most natural resource communities is more

determined by cycles of resource availability. Furthermore, it is difficult to plan when so much depends upon an unpredictable resource.

In contrast to other studies that focus on the occupational culture of fishing, Smith and Hanna (1993) examine how community factors can differentiate behavior of fishermen. Their study of the West Coast trawl fishery in Oregon analyzed community as a determinant of cultural behavior and found that face-to-face interactions characteristic of community life facilitated the transfer of ideas which then influenced patterns of trawl fishing (Smith and Hanna 1993). The idea that individual fishing communities develop distinct cultural characteristics is an important finding that demonstrates there can be considerable variation among specialized natural resource communities.

Chekki (1997) notes that as a result of the impact that globalization of the economy has had on both community and the environment there is a need for increased community empowerment to ensure sustainable development. With the fast pace of globalization there has been widespread destruction of the environment which disrupts communities dependent upon natural resources. Often affected by multi-national corporations seeking commodities for export, Chekki (1997) suggests that one answer to both resource and community sustainability may be the empowerment of communities through grassroots organization. In its fight to remain a sustainable community with its own identity, Cortez has organized several grassroots efforts to survive and sustain a particular way of life.

There has been considerable thought given to the idea of "sustainable communities." In that regard, it has been implied that only specific types of behavior within a community or group of individuals, e.g., cooperation, may provide the sustainability needed for survival of a community (Stark 1998). Furthermore, some have

suggested that communities can and may have lost their ability to cooperate that enables them to function in a sustainable manner. Losing that ability to cooperate can negate the benefits from development initiatives; consequently, making such communities the target of redevelopment efforts may be unwise (Mulkey et al. 1993). However, understanding how communities have lost the capacity to cooperate may require a broader analysis of how such changes fit into the larger global economy and world political structure (Prattis 2001).

Finally, the idea that communities can begin a decline that could eventually end in the death of a community is also a possibility (Gallaher and Padfield 1980). Many small isolated rural communities have faced substantial changes in the advance of urbanization, industrialization and bureaucratization. These challenges of modernity which bring changes in technology, transportation and communication have important implications for communities like Cortez where most change has been controlled from within. But, with increasing frequency, it is outsiders who begin to introduce and control the change. Over time, the processes commonly used by locals begin to weaken and community members begin to shift their loyalty from the specific locale and begin to focus on a larger frame of reference (Gallaher and Padfield 1980:4). Additionally, as Clawson (1980) points out, changes in the natural resource base will have long-lasting impacts upon those communities dependent upon them. Whether natural resource dependent communities are capable of making the transition to another economic base is always uncertain as evidenced by Overbey's (1982) study of a coastal Georgia community and the development of a naval base.

Cortez, like so many other commercial fishing villages in Florida, struggles to maintain its working commercial waterfront amidst growing tourism development and increasingly strict management of the natural resource base. It may no longer be a viable fishing community, at least in the same sense that so many of its longtime residents perceive it to be.

### **Tradition and Identity**

As discussed earlier, the fishermen of Cortez have struggled with an unflattering perception by others and have questioned their own identity as a result of that scrutiny. Their image of themselves is steeped in the legendary independence often associated with cowboys (Agar 1986) and heroes who settle on the margins of society (Bellah et al. 1985). That image fits nicely with the recurring theme of independence in American lore summarized by Bellah et al.:

A deep and continuing theme in American literature is the hero who must leave society, alone or with one or a few others, in order to realize the moral good in the wilderness, at sea or on the margins of settled society (Bellah et al. 1985:144).

Nevertheless, this is not the image that most Floridians have of fishermen, or their communities. The growing population along Florida's coasts has brought significant development and a rapidly changing landscape. Such rapid change often weakens or eliminates the social patterns established from the old "traditions," and new traditions appear (Hobsbawm 1983). While commercial fishing of modern day Cortesians hardly resembles the commercial fishing of their forefathers, they still claim this heritage and tradition. And as the community has changed dramatically over the years it certainly bears little resemblance to the isolated community of the past. Yet, Cortesians cling to that past and attempt to recreate the social gatherings that were an integral part of their childhood and institutionalize them by holding a recurring "Native's Picnic" and "fish

frys" every year. These references to the past are important as the repetitive tradition becomes an important event symbolizing social cohesion and membership in a community. Furthermore, although these invented traditions may not genuinely reflect the past, their purpose may have a political purpose and will often appear at times when there is social disruption and social ties are weak (Hobsbawm 1983).

Identity becomes a symbol that is offered in many ways to explain who and what Cortez embodies. The symbols are gatherings like the native's picnic or the fish frys where community members come together to share food and music. Cortez is a fishing community that becomes symbolized through the common food that is shared which was most often mullet. Part of that identity is also the close kinship ties that become expressed through family gatherings but also through recounting the history of the village and its settlement by five families from North Carolina, both through oral tradition and documented history. However, although these symbols are generally agreed upon, some may find discrepancies within the recounting of history or its documentation. And while solidarity is an important aspect of sharing an identity, there often remains some discord within the group.

Li (1996) examined the different images of community that became apparent through the struggle over resources. It is often through the exercise of 'practical political economy' that these different images are contrasted within the larger society. The image of community as consensus and sustainability is often successfully used by those who advocate 'community based resource management' (Li 1996:503). But it is also the case that some definitions of community can misrepresent current natural resource use systems and exclude those who may need access the most (Li 1996). The changing

image of community is at the heart of Tauxe's (1998) examination of small town identity. It seems that earlier images of community promoted by the local Chambers of Commerce included ideals of solidarity and local identity. Economic restructuring due to a changing economy brought a new emphasis upon a more nationally recognized myth of rural life and the connection between local and national levels of production (Tauxe 1998). Such a shift away from local identity is important, as residents must then reassess their own identity. Such was the case described by LiPuma (1992) as Galician fishermen resisted joining the European Community. Through their resistance they were able to modify the transition to a fully rationalized fishery and its institutions of management while maintaining some remnants of their previous social identity.

Fitzgerald (1993) illustrates the important role of the culture-communication dialogue in forming and maintaining identities. Through the use of metaphor, identity becomes an image of self-within-context. As context changes, so does the image and eventually identity. Moving from one context to another it becomes necessary to project that image for others to comprehend. Therefore the ability to communicate an image one wishes to maintain becomes essential. When there is ambivalence about one's identity others may impose their image of self-in-context. Therefore, the media as a primary source of communication becomes increasingly important in shaping these images.

For the fishermen and their families of Cortez, the image of hard-working, self-sufficient, independent people was not the image that most Floridians would recognize. In fact, as suggested in earlier research, fishing folk in Florida were not perceived as being the independent and positive image of cowboy, but that of outlaw, which in turn, prompted fishing families to begin using the metaphor of Indians from the Wild West,

suggesting they were being pushed off their native lands into reservations surrounded by foreigners (Smith and Jepson 1993).

### **Tourism: its Promise and its Presence**

Tourism has evolved into one of the most profound agents of global change since the last world war. Today, tourists can travel to any corner of the globe and observe any landscape and/or people with relatively few inconveniences. The tourism industry has become an "amicable" conqueror with its almost troop-like movement of people around the earth and destinations that resemble luxurious enclosures surrounded by privation. There is a fervor with which tourism has been pursued to redress the economic woes of the world. The promise of economic redevelopment by increasing the tourist dollar has been a common proposition with varied results. What has been surprising is that, at times, it has been perceived as having benign impacts, even though it often encompasses tremendous growth and holds potential for considerable change.

Only within the last three decades have social scientists begun to seriously examine tourism and its varied impacts. Some concentrated on the beneficial impacts that tourism brought to the hosts and guests (Rothman 1978; Milman and Pizam 1988), but others examined the sometimes hidden liabilities of rapid growth and large scale development that tourism can bring about (Greenwood 1972; McGoodwin 1986).

Tourism has received mixed reviews from social scientists that have often been critical of constant growth and development at the expense of those who endure at the lower levels of the social stratum (Crick 1989; Nash 1989). However, others have used a more holistic approach that offers a comprehensive view of this phenomenon called tourism.

### What is Tourism?

Jonathon Urry (1990) contends that the purpose of tourism is to gaze upon or view a different landscape, townscape, or way of life (culture). He states that each touristic view presupposes its opposite and is organized in such a manner as to separate work and leisure. The tourist, of course wants to be as far away as possible from work. Boorstin (1964) calls it a 'pseudo event' created for the tourist who is encapsulated in an environmental bubble which shelters them from the real world; again, that real world which may include work. MacCannell (1973) sees all tourists as being on a quest for authenticity and what they find is "staged authenticity." This develops not from an individuated search for authenticity, but by the social relations that evolve between the tourist and the observed. Crick (1989) argues that all culture is staged. There seems to be in all forms of tourism some negotiation between what is real and what is not. Part of the lure is to "get away from it all."

Urry (1990) suggests that the places gazed upon often contrast with paid organized work. Tourism offers an out of the ordinary element with professionals who create and arrange an ever-changing hierarchy of objects to be gazed upon. Tourists wish to view an illusion of paradise, one that fits their own conception. Although, MacCannell sees some fascination with other's workplaces as tourist attraction and refers to it as 'alienated leisure' (1976).

For Graburn (1989) tourism is a transition from Durkheim's Sacred to the profane - the sacred being the non-ordinary experience or tourism. The movement from the realm of the profane work-a-day world to the sacred non-ordinary world is filled with feelings of excitement and ambivalence. The basic motivation for tourism according to Graburn is re-creation.



Tourism has increasingly become important to those who live in industrialized nations. The Protestant work ethic is no longer the accepted value norm. Vacations are an expected annual ritual that can be analyzed as such (Graburn 1989). Tourism depends, in a large part, upon the existence of leisure time and discretionary income and positive local sanctions. With the advent of large scale tourism there also may transpire a transfer of control from the local level to the federal or international level that resembles a form of imperialism when control is taken over by outsiders (Nash 1989).

The above review raises important concerns for communities like Cortez, which are surrounded by tourism. Tourism by its very nature has a tendency to transform those that become gazed upon. Those with sufficient leisure and discretionary income encourage newer and more exciting views upon which to gaze. The tourism professional then seeks these new, out of the ordinary, experiences and markets them to the tourist. In the process, commercial fishermen, who may or may not be out of the ordinary, must be sanitized to fit with the expectations of those of a different social class and geographical locale. For fishing communities to take advantage of the economic prosperity that tourism often promises, is to put themselves at great risk of being transformed themselves.

Rural communities have frequently suffered dramatic changes in character never mentioned in the promised economic windfall from tourism development. Increased employment opportunities have frequently been low-paying service sector jobs which contribute to the marginalizing of those who choose to remain in these often isolated communities. Rising property values and taxes resulting from structural changes in the economic base have serious impacts on traditional inhabitants of rural villages and towns

(Greenwood 1972; Smith and Jepson 1993). Outsiders from different geographical regions and socioeconomic class are often able to acquire coastal property because local residents are unable to afford the higher costs of living associated with tourism development (Oliver-Smith et al.1989).

Rural coastal communities have been especially vulnerable to this "growth machine" and process of gentrification. Because they live primarily on the coast, commercial fishermen and their property have been frequent targets in the battle for control over waterfront property. Because they often do not have the resources or skills necessary to challenge their opponents, commercial fishermen often lose their battles to maintain the continuity of their community or occupation (Gale 1991; Meltzoff 1989). Furthermore, as documented by Kitner (1996) the promised economic windfall from tourism does not always trickle down to those in the lower classes, like fishermen. In fact, tourism development on Isla Margarita created new dichotomies of development between the new and old, urban and rural and the rich and poor (Kitner 1996).

As elsewhere, the constant growth in tourism development along Florida's coast over the past several decades has displaced commercial fishermen and their families from their traditional communities. Because their numbers have been decreasing, they often lose their voice in local governance and fisheries management which now threatens to dislodge commercial fishermen from their customary place on the water (Smith and Jepson 1993).

### **The Political: Economy and Ecology.**

By its very nature ethnography places the anthropologist within a very small and confined social system. Describing that system in detail can often de-emphasize the role of the larger economy and history and their impact upon local life. Placing local subjects

within the context of a world economy and the development of capitalism is the essence of the political economy approach within anthropology (Roseberry 1988). This is not intended to oversimplify the scope of political economy, but more to emphasize the point that the fishermen and residents of Cortez do participate and enjoy many of the products of the larger capitalist economy within which they live. In turn, that same economy and historical circumstance have played a role in their current situation.

From the beginning, anthropologists working within the political economy framework have been concerned with the role of class, capitalism and power and their effect upon local life. Also important has been the relationship to the means of production (Roseberry 1988). The importance for fishermen, worldwide, has been a very tenuous relationship to their means of production. Fishermen do not own land and therefore have little control over access to the resource upon which they depend. Fishermen may own their boat and fishing gear, but access to the resource is often regulated by a complex set of laws that are in large part established by others; others who are often of a different socio-economic class and status. This has created a rather complicated relationship regarding control and ownership over the resource that becomes coupled to class and power relationships, both within their own community and the larger society, if not globally. This has been reflected in the study of common property resources and the resulting dialogue on the true nature of fishermen's relationship to their resource and a reexamination of Hardin's (1968) famous essay on the problem with common property (McCay and Acheson 1987).

The work in political economy was naturally similar to much of that emerging out of environmental anthropology and eventually political ecology. Political ecology

examines those structural relations of power with regard to access and domination of natural resources (Scoones 1999). The term was first introduced by Wolf (1972) and has since grown rapidly into a promising area of research of its own. However, some have questioned whether or not many political ecologists have truly integrated the environment into their research, focusing primarily on the political and ignoring the ecological (Vayda and Walters 1999). Because the topics are so similar and they are so often intertwined, it is difficult to distinguish the economically political from the ecologically political. Nevertheless, work in both areas is important because class and power struggles are always closely tied to access to and management of natural resources, including the politics of place (Little 1999; Keith and Pile 1993).

Exploring some of the aforementioned similarities in approach, Ciccantell (1999) combines both political economy and ecology to examine the consequences for rural communities in the Brazilian Amazon when natural resources are defined in such manner as to place those communities in competition with the national government and its intention to exploit those resources through a global economy. When such a redefinition of resources occurs, those in power repeatedly overlook the regional definitions, which are often closely tied to communities and their access and use of resources. When rivers were to have electro-hydraulic dams put in place the government was imposing definitions of those resources that were more compatible with the powerful and sometimes foreign competitors.

McGoodwin (1986) and McGuire (1983) have both examined the Mexican shrimp fishery and find that world export markets have had significant impacts upon the rural populace and generate conflict among the local users of the resource. Bailey et al. (1986)

has found that fisheries development is also driven by policy that favors urban elites and is fashioned by national and international agencies. In Florida, some have pointed to the important context of power relations between fishermen and the growth machine behind tourism and a large global market (Johnson and Orbach 1990; Meltzoff 1989). Tourism and global marketing of fisheries resources have both influenced fishermen's ability to remain in their natal homes and to continue to remain in their occupation.

Cortez fishermen find themselves embroiled in struggles that encompass the global market for mullet roe and other seafood, plus the power and politics of fishery management at several levels of government. They resist the definition of fishery resources as being more important economically if used by the recreational sector that is gaining favor with some sportsmen and managers (Farren 1994). Their community is under pressure from a tourism growth machine that places more emphasis upon recreation than work. The ensuing power and political struggles are at all levels of government and require them to become adept at challenging these new definitions of the resource.

### **The Culture of Resistance**

The idea of resistance has not been closely associated with fishermen and their struggles to survive. Although, it is often mentioned in terms of their disdain for regulatory procedure, the nature of resistance has not been fully explored. Much of the discussion for resistance has centered on rebellion and indigenous or peasant movements. However, these discussions are relevant to resistance by fishermen and their communities.

Although present day fishermen of Cortez are not peasants by any means, it was George Zarur's (1975) dissertation on the seafood gatherers of Mullet Springs that may

have first pointed to the similarities between these fishermen of Florida and peasants elsewhere around the world (Zarur 1975). Scott (1985) pointed out that peasant rebellion is seldom the large-scale insurrection that topples an unjust state. After all, the subordinate classes rarely have the opportunity for well organized political opposition and therefore resort to a much more subtle type of rebellion. He points to "everyday forms of resistance" as being the preferred tool of peasants who struggle against those who wish to "extract labor, food, taxes and rent from them." This type of "low-profile" resistance consists of non-compliance, foot-dragging, evasion, or deception that takes little organization, yet collectively can make a shambles of policies designed and implemented by their antagonists. Best suited for the social structure of the peasantry, these defensive campaigns of attrition fit well with the lack of formal organization and rarely consist of outright confrontation. In fact, most acts of everyday resistance are done quietly with little acknowledgment and are more apt to slowly nibble away at policies through an extended, guerrilla-style campaign that is reinforced by a popular culture of resistance that becomes part of every day life.

Peasants harbor a "deep sense of injustice" according to Wolf (1969) that has laid the groundwork for many revolutions. That sense of injustice can often stem from an infringement upon the traditional sentiment of a peasant's "right to subsistence" (Scott 1976). This infringement happens through some interference with their ability to subsist through taxes, laws or access to land.

The idea of a "moral economy" or "right to subsistence" has also been applied to fishermen here in the United States as described in Dyer and Moberg's (1992) discussion of the Gulf of Mexico's shrimpers' fight over laws requiring the use of Turtle Excluder

Devices. They discuss the practices that shrimpers have developed in response to mandated use of these devices. Sewing openings shut or dragging nets without TEDs were common practices as shrimpers resisted the use of such devices claiming they lost shrimp and were too costly.

McCay (1984) maintains that illegal fishing in New Jersey is cultural and tied to historical disputes over property rights and enclosure of the marine commons that eventually dispossesses the commoner. It continues with community consensus sustained by a myth that state government discriminates against commercial fishermen. But, Curcione (1992) has demonstrated that commercial fishermen should not be singled out with regard to such activity as recreational fishermen also take part in such deviant behavior.

The idea that poaching is a "folk crime" persists according to Muth (1998) because this type of crime tends not to violate public sentiments. Indeed, terminology that characterizes those who poach, i.e., outlaw, pirates, bandits, has a somewhat more benign meaning than terms like criminal and violator (Muth 1998:5). Theft of natural resources is on the increase and yet the majority of North Americans seem ambivalent toward this criminal activity, in part, because they see these protagonists as marginal to the larger society and who possibly depend upon these resources to support their families and traditional way of life (Muth and Bowe 1998:9).

In their research of poaching in Southwest Louisiana, Forsyth, Gramling, and Wooddell (1998) see much of the rapid change in Louisiana as changing rural populations as postindustrial values, often urban values, gain ascendancy. As values shift

long-term residents become classified as deviant for the illegal taking of natural resources that were once considered legal.

Furthermore, the response by two Mexican fishing communities to regulations imposed by outside interests according to Vasquez (1994) are similarly those of avoidance, infringement of areal and seasonal closures, use of illegal gear, etc. She concludes that this illegal activity is not merely methodological individualism and profit maximization, but more collective action that weighs opportunity. She further suggests such behaviors may exist in response to communal pressures and a lack of alternatives (Vasquez 1994:78).

Many of these same behaviors can be found in Cortez. Fishermen regularly test the limits of law enforcement by fishing in a manner that is or can be interpreted as being illegal. Although it may be illegal, fishermen express a right to access to these resources. Fish that were once available to them are now are inaccessible because of new regulations which often favor landowners or recreational fishermen. Newly dredged canals provide a haven for fish that never existed before and certain species have been designated recreational take only by fishery management agencies. These new circumstances seem wrong to most commercial fishermen who believe their traditional use of these resources should be protected.

Fishermen from Cortez, like fishermen I have studied elsewhere, often develop strategies to elude or challenge law enforcement. While conducting research on the Texas Bay shrimpers, on one particular trip that I remember, fishermen were to catch shrimp migrating out to sea from inland waters through the Intercoastal canal, in which it was illegal to shrimp. That evening when it was dark, shrimpers traveled down the canal



and lined up to place their nets in the water. They radioed each other to ensure that the local marine patrol or Coast Guard were not near. On our boat the net was hauled up with its load of shrimp. The captain kept it hanging over the side of the boat so he could quickly pull the rope around the codend and dump the contents if the marine patrol suddenly appeared. Once at the dock, everyone worked at a fevered pitch to pack the shrimp into a truck hidden away before law enforcement could show up.

Similar stories were often heard in Cortez. Fishermen would delight in telling stories of enterprising exploits and close calls with law enforcement. When caught, they would often challenge the case in court and frequently win or get by with minimal fines. Wildlife law enforcement officials are often frustrated and share the above mentioned concern about "folk crimes" as judges are reluctant to prosecute or impose large fines or incarcerate fishermen. They view them as working class individuals and are hesitant to make criminals out of them for violating resource laws.

Nevertheless, it does seem that not only in Cortez, but fishing communities overall, there does seem to be a pervasive pattern of resistance to restricting access to natural resources upon which they depend. Closely tied to that belief are feelings of injustice when access is denied or restricted through regulation by fisheries management or other regulatory agencies..

### **Social Justice**

The emerging environmental justice framework in relation to community and environmental risks has received considerable attention from social scientists (Perrole 1993). Within that body of literature important themes have evolved that are applicable to natural resource communities and their struggles for redefinition of their resources (Ciccantell 1999). The focus of the social justice and environment literature has been on

groups who have been unjustly exposed to environmental risks. Little has been written concerning social justice in relation to access to natural resources. But, the issues are closely tied, as the relations of power and class become inevitable focal points in the discussions of both. In addition, the scientific discourse that accompanies those relations is also an important focus because there is often a distinct difference in comprehension and acceptance of the basic tenets of the underlying science (Durrenberger 1990; Paolisso 2002).

Natural resource dependent communities are often altered through development or management changes that may not affect other communities that do not rely upon natural resources. This special relationship to the environment is often unrecognized in many development and management initiatives and can have dramatic impacts upon these communities. Derman and Ferguson (1994) describe the impacts of tourism development on a fishing community in Malawi, Africa. When a local hotel with new foreign ownership desired to expand its operations, the entire village was evicted with the state's approval. No relocation effort was made and most families relocated to an area that offered poor access to resources and unhealthy living conditions. This is not a unique occurrence and continues as large-scale development triumphs in the struggle with small rural communities over access to resources (Derman and Ferguson 1994). Johnston (1994) describes the conflict and subsequent impacts of "managed development" in the Virgin Islands when islanders find themselves alienated from land and the sea. With the strong influence of the North American tourism industry and growing development of the coast, the term resource becomes redefined relative to science and management practices also brought to the islands from North America (Johnston 1994).

### **Theoretical Themes**

As I have mentioned there was no general theoretical perspective that guided my research, however, it must be noted that in many respects the principal theoretical theme is one of community. Community provides the primary framework for understanding all other theoretical perspectives. Arensberg and Kimball (1965) referred to it as the "master social system" or major link between culture and community. Whether it still remains as that critical link is questionable. Today, with a global economy and communication we have become a very mobile society more accustomed to virtual communities with few if any ties to any particular geographic location and relationships based upon association rather than face to face encounters. It is important to understand that as a natural resource community Cortez becomes tied to a geographic locale which has important implications as an ecological definition of community. It differs considerably from communities surrounding it that are often communities of association where the residents come together for recreation, leisure or retirement and do not have as long a history in that location. Membership in a community of association is fluid and residents come and go as long as they have the financial resources and are willing to abide by certain rules of association, in some cases. Residents of Cortez, however, belong to a much more structured group that often necessitates a kinship connection with others and possible participation in some commercial fishing enterprise. In one sense it is an occupational community where face to face encounters with a closely connected group happen daily both at work and home. This does not mean that all residents are related or commercial fishermen. Being part of the community of Cortez is more than just residing within the village and being a fisherman. There is a shared sense of belonging and membership is

often gauged by willingness to participate in community events, the industry or at least be supportive of commercial fishing.

Community becomes the primary social organization through which collective solutions are pursued which in turn ensures survival of the group or community (Gallaher and Padfield 1980). So, while Cortez is a geographically anchored place, it is also a perceived place of shared belonging for a group of people. As mentioned earlier, that group can extend well beyond the boundaries of the geographical location to include those who have previously lived in Cortez or are connected through kinship. So, membership in the community of Cortez is not necessarily as fluid as communities of association, but it includes others who live outside of the geographical boundaries of the natural resource dependent community. Yet, to be included one must share a sense of belonging that may be tied to an historical association or shared belief in the survival of the fishing community.

The literature on tourism is significant as Florida's economy is closely tied to the revenue that is generated from the millions of visitors that come to the state each year, especially coastal counties. Tourism development is often pursued to provide economic stimulus or, as in the case of Cortez, it may also aid in educating the public. The primary goal of the planned maritime center was to provide a forum to present informative programs about commercial fishing and the history of the village. This certainly raises important question about the relationship between host and guest. Fishermen from Cortez often commented that they did not want to feel as though they were museum pieces. But as tourists are paraded around the village, one might begin to have that notion. Furthermore, as discussed earlier the often anticipated economic benefits may not

accrue to the fishermen or other villagers. Fishermen want to fish and do not necessarily want to be museum workers. Moreover, the necessary skills in managing or working in a museum are not the same as those needed to handle a fishing boat and use a net. Needless to say, there were many questions concerning the impacts and benefits of such a venture.

With the maritime center's mission of educating the public as its primary focus, presenting an acceptable image of commercial fishing is closely tied to tourism. It becomes one medium by which the community presents its self; this is who we are. That image will be important in several respects for if the maritime center is to be successful the image must be one people are willing to accept and willing to view. The appropriateness of that image then becomes coupled to the culture of resistance that has helped define this community. The question becomes: can the village advocate resistance and still portray an image that the general public will accept? The answer to that question becomes even more important as their adversaries in the net ban campaign begin to formulate their own image of Cortez and commercial fishermen in general.

The net ban campaign places this community and commercial fishermen in situation that raises significant questions concerning power relations. As commercial and recreational fishing interest groups began lobbying public officials and the general populace, there were distinct power differentials that became evident. While recreational fishing interest groups claimed that the commercial industry had fishery management agencies and legislators on their side, it was evident from the beginning that their resources were far greater, both monetarily and politically. Furthermore, within the management arena commercial fishermen have lost a part of their voice as fisheries

management has become much more dependent upon complex biological models to determine stock status. Whereas, in the past commercial fishermen were often invited to give their assessment of stock status based upon their experience on the water, more recently their judgment is often considered biased. Commercial fishermen are often from a lower socio-economic class with lower average education levels than their counterparts in recreational fishing groups and state bureaucratic officials. This places them at a distinct disadvantage as they may shy away from public speaking or challenging complex bureaucratic rules and regulations. This, in part, explains fishermen's preference for resistance on the water; it is a place where their skills match or exceed their adversary's.

As I have tried to link these various bodies of literature, I think it is clear that each of these theoretical areas have some bearing upon the community which is the central organizing theme. The image of Cortez and of commercial fishermen overall will be important variables in the upcoming challenge to their identity and occupation. The extent to which resistance can help or hinder their attempts to survive will be a key to their success. As it stands, their chances of survival given potential changes to their natural resource base as a result of stock declines or restricted access are dependent upon their ability to fashion an acceptable resistance that is reflected in a positive image to the general public. On the other hand, if their opponents are successful in redefining both the resource and their identity, then the survival of Cortez as a fishing community may be in jeopardy.

### CHAPTER 3 THE ENVIRONMENT

This chapter describes both the physical and social environments that surround the community of Cortez, Florida. Included in the description of the physical environment are a description of the ecosystem, a discussion of fishing trends for both commercial and recreational sectors, and a brief discussion of the regulation of both. The description of the social environment includes census data and other demographic characteristics for Florida, Manatee County and the community of Cortez. Finally, a discussion of the trends found in both environments and some possible implications for the community concludes the chapter.

It is Florida's impressive natural environment that draws so many people to this state and in doing so has shaped a social setting with a rich history and challenging future. The warm climate, beautiful beaches, abundant fish and wildlife have persuaded many a visitor to become a permanent resident, and if not, at least, a permanent seasonal visitor. Like so many other parts of the state, the central west coastline has supported many ancient populations like the Timucuans, Tocobago, Calusa, and other prehistoric groups. This same productive environment is what attracted the Spanish fishermen from Havana and the fishermen from North Carolina who eventually settled Cortez. Today, the modern day population centers of Tampa Bay/St. Petersburg and Sarasota/Bradenton continue to attract migrants who have a decidedly keen interest in those natural resources.

Cortez is situated on the northern most point of Sarasota Bay (Figure 3-1), to the west of Bradenton and just south of Tampa/St. Petersburg. Anna Maria Island, just to the

south of Tampa Bay, with its white sand beaches and blue-green waters acts as a buffer to the Gulf of Mexico and provides a safe harbor for Cortez fishermen. In some ways, it is ironic that this once pristine natural environment with its abundant resources, which has provided the impetus for such rapid growth has created a social environment



Figure 3-1. Cortez as Located on Florida's Gulf Coast.

that now may threaten the future sustainability of so many resources and the communities that depend upon them.

### **The Natural Environment**

Florida's coastline is approximately 1,350 miles in length, longer than the coastlines of Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas combined. Moreover, it is nearly equal to that of all other Atlantic seaboard states. It embodies a diverse array of habitats that includes coral reefs, beach rocks and the Gulf Stream. Inland Florida has an extensive network of wetlands, freshwater lakes, rivers and streams that supply the important habitat and nursery areas found in the brackish salt marshes and mangrove swamps along the coast. Over 1100 species of fish live in Florida's aquatic habitats, with ten times more marine than freshwater species. These saltwater dwellers depend upon



the coastal salt marshes, mangrove forests, and sea grass meadows for food, shelter, growth and reproduction (Seaman 1985).

Marshes, mangroves, and swamps are all classified as wetlands. Florida's marine/estuarine wetlands consist of three different types: 1) Carolinian - characterized by marshes and well-developed barrier islands with small to moderate tidal range; 2) West Indian - characterized by low-lying limestone shoreline with calcareous sands and marls with a tropical biota which includes coral reefs and mangroves and a small tidal range; and 3) Louisiana - similar to Carolinian. Tidal marshes occur over much of Florida's coastline and are marked by periodic flooding with salt or brackish water due to tidal flow. Tidal marsh makes up approximately 80 to 90 percent of the South Atlantic and Gulf coastlines of Florida, making it the largest coastal marsh area in the U.S. These areas are important habitat and protected areas for both adult and juvenile fish, birds and invertebrates. In addition, the existence of these marsh areas also provides important protection to shorelines from erosion and can act to remove excess nutrients from the water column (Durako et. al. 1985).

Almost one third of the state's saltwater marsh area stretches along the Gulf coast from Tarpon Springs to Apalachicola. However, the extent and type of saltwater marsh south of Tarpon Springs differs from that to the north. Tidal marshes in central west Florida, south of Tarpon Springs, are more transitional communities between the mangroves and freshwater. Mangroves dominate the wetlands from Tarpon Springs south, with black (*Avicennia germinans*), red (*Rhizophora mangle*) and white (*Laguncularia racemosa*) mangrove being the most common. Mangrove may be the dominant inter-tidal plant community in the state with as much as 272,973 hectares,

although estimates vary (Durako et al. 1985; Florida Coastal Management Program 1997). Mangrove forests, like other wetlands areas are critical habitat for many fish and other invertebrates.

Sarasota Bay acquired its modern day shape around 5,000 years ago. It was formed by offshore bars migrating upward creating the barrier islands to the West and causing the formation of wetlands in the shallower areas. Earlier in the bay's history, when the climate was colder, tidal marsh was more prevalent. Because this past century has been relatively warm, there has been an increase in mangrove coverage, although more recently that coverage has begun to shrink. Sarasota Bay is close to the northern limit for mangrove forests in Florida as mangrove is a cold-sensitive tree. Today, Sarasota Bay has more than 90 percent of its tidal wetland in mangrove (Estevez 1992).

Freshwater contributions to Sarasota Bay are minimal and the many passes which connect the bay with the influence of the Gulf of Mexico, account for the high salinities found in this system (Comp and Seaman 1985). Tampa Bay, to the north of Cortez, has five major rivers which discharge into the bay. With widely spaced barrier islands fronting this bay, Gulf water freely circulates and provides a rather well defined salinity gradient. The lower half of Tampa Bay is dominated by mangrove along its shore.

Florida had nearly 20,400,000 acres of wetland in 1850. By 1985, the state had lost roughly 9,300,000 acres, or almost half of its wetlands. Sarasota Bay was no different than the state as a whole. From 1948 to 1987, 51 percent of the marsh and mangrove areas of the bay area were lost, giving an average loss of 59 acres per year (Estevez 1992). The significance of this loss becomes obvious when the importance of these areas as fishery habitat is examined (Lewis et al. 1985).

### Florida's Ecosystem and Fishery Resources

In Florida, over 70 percent of the commercially and recreationally landed species of finfish and shellfish are estuarine-dependent for at least part of their life cycle. For the Atlantic coast of Florida, between 60-70 percent of economically important species spend some part of their life cycle in estuaries. Furthermore, over 90 percent of the commercial biomass and 80 percent of the recreational biomass from the Gulf of Mexico are estuarine dependent. Estuarine ecosystems play an extremely important role in life cycle for these important resources. Because of the complexity of any species life history, habitat use becomes a "mosaic" of use with various different types and areas being inhabited during different life stages. The alteration of any one of these habitats can critically affect a species' ability to sustain a healthy population.

One of the most important roles for the coastal marsh system is as a nursery area. Many of the estuarine-dependent species spawn offshore while their larvae are transported into the estuary. With their beginning in those areas of less salinity, they grow and move toward areas of higher salinity and eventually complete their life cycle offshore. In addition, as adults many species utilize these marsh areas for protection, feeding and other purposes. Some of the more important estuarine-dependent commercial species are menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*), penaeid shrimp (*Penaeidae*), blue crabs (*Callinectes sapidus*), and black or striped mullet (*Mugil cephalus*). Important estuarine-dependent recreational species are spotted sea trout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*), red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), sand sea trout (*Cynoscion arenarius*), tarpon (*Megalops atlantica*) and black drum (*Pogonias cromis*). Still, some reef fish, i.e. red grouper (*Epinephelus morio*), and other pelagics (ocean going *Scrombridae*) may also depend upon these estuarine systems at some stage in their life history.

### Trends in Florida Fishing

Florida's commercial and recreational fisheries provide important sources of food and recreation for both residents and visitors. Florida's total commercial seafood landings averaged around 180 million pounds from 1974 to 1994, prior to the net ban, with an average value of just less than 155 million dollars a year (Figure 3-2).

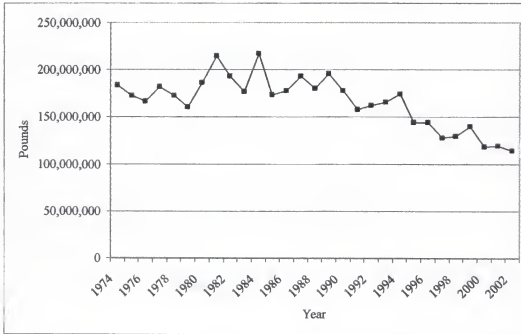


Figure 3-2. Florida's Total Commercial Fisheries Landings from 1974 to 2002. Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2004

After the net ban became effective in 1995, average pounds drop below 150 million pounds and average around 130 million pounds. Florida's West coast averaged a little less than 125 million pounds during the time period of 1974-1994 with an average value of around 112 million dollars per year (Figure 3-3). Shrimp was the leading species in terms of value in the early 1950s, but since then the value of finfish and other invertebrates have caught up and are now almost equal in terms of value. Finfish have historically lead in terms of pounds landed but recently total landing weight has dropped

and is now equivalent to both shrimp and invertebrates (Florida Coastal Management Program 1997).

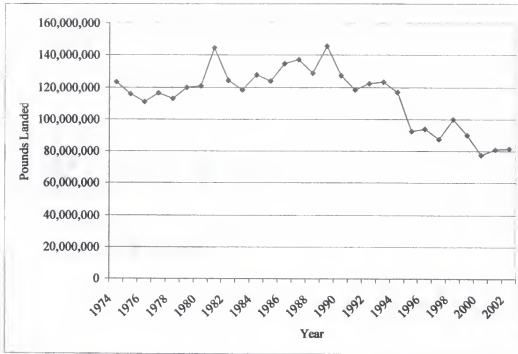


Figure 3-3. Florida West Coast Total Commercial Fisheries Landings from 1974 to 2002. Source: National Marine Fisheries Service, 2004.

Landings have been relatively constant for Florida overall and the west coast, although the most recent years have been toward the lower end of the range. The most recent decrease in landings is due to the net ban and prior to that other regulation may have induced lower landings. Increased regulation has often limited the amount of fish landed through implementation of Total Allowable Catch rules and quotas. A decreasing biomass which, is the impetus for increasing regulation, may be attributed to overfishing by both commercial and recreational fishermen. But, more importantly and not often readily apparent are decreases in biomass due to problems within the ecosystem such as, pollution, loss of habitat and other environmental distress. These are long-term problems

that are very complex and difficult to explain and assess in terms of impact and effect upon fish populations.

Saltwater recreational fishing has long been an important part of Florida's recreational economy. It was not until the early 1980's, however, that Florida and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) began to gather data on the number of recreational fishermen, their catch and effort. For that reason, accurate and reliable data on recreational fishermen does not exist prior to 1981. Early data collected by the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey (MRFSS) was problematic and had very large margins of error. That system has been improved although there are some who still believe the margins of error are too large. In addition, Florida did not require a saltwater fishing license until 1989 and therefore did not have a very reliable count on the actual number of recreational fishermen. Furthermore, the present licensing system excludes fishermen from docks and the shore in that they are not required to hold a fishing license.

Florida's commercial and recreational saltwater fishermen compete for a wide variety of species of fish, but only a few are important to both. Over the years, that competition has lead to vigorous debate over how Florida's fisheries are managed and who should receive an allocation or suffer the impacts of regulation. Figures 3-4 through 3-8 provide landings for both commercial and recreational fishermen for several species. Bluefish (*Pomatomus saltatrix*) landings have been relatively equivalent, although landings overall have been higher in most years for the recreational fishery, over time there has been a decrease in landings for both sectors. According to the Florida Marine Research Institute (Murphy and Muller 1995) bluefish landings showed a significant decline from 1981 to 1994 along the Atlantic coast but showed no such trend for the Gulf

coast (Figure 3-4). Commercial catch rates for bluefish showed no significant change from 1988 except for after the net ban in 1995, while catch rates for recreational fishermen have increased on the Atlantic side and fluctuated without trend for the Gulf coast. Bluefish were considered overexploited in 1994 (Murphy and Muller, 1995).

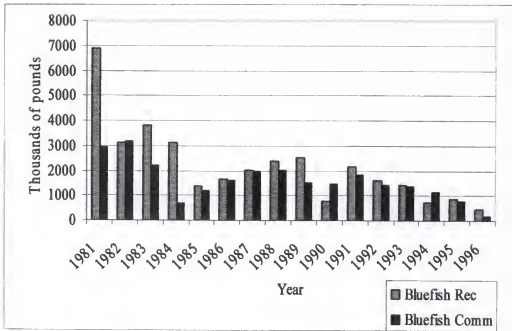


Figure 3-4. Bluefish Landings for Recreational and Commercial Fishermen from 1981-1996. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

Spotted sea trout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*) landings (Figure 3-5) illustrate that this fishery has historically been a recreational fishery. As with bluefish, spotted sea trout has seen a decline in landings for both sectors. Catch rates for the commercial sector are constant because of regulations implementing a quota and trip limits in 1989. Catch rates for the recreational sector increased in 1990 and 1991 after new regulations were imposed. Assessments completed on spotted sea trout in 1995 and 1994 suggested that the spawning potential ratio was between 15 and 19 percent, below the target level of 35

percent established by the Marine Fisheries Commission (Murphy and Muller 1995).

Spotted sea trout landings after the net ban are discussed in Chapter 7.

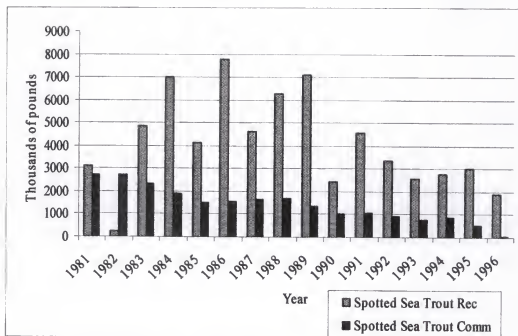


Figure 3-5. Florida Spotted Sea Trout Landings for Commercial and Recreational Sectors from 1981-1996. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

Black Mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) has traditionally been a commercial species (Figure 3-6). This is primarily because it is difficult to catch mullet with a hook and line, unless you are very patient with a blade of grass or bread ball. Mullet have a catadromous life cycle, which means they reside in fresh water but spawn at sea (Murphy and Muller 1995).

Historically, commercial fishermen with large seines or gill nets caught mullet, as they “bunch up” in small groups. Mullet develop roe and spawn from November to January. As they get closer to spawning they form large groups very tightly bunched together and swim out to sea. They make an easy target for any net fishermen who might be there at the time of their migration. When mullet roe became more valuable in the



1970's as demand from Asian markets increased, it became the primary fishery for many Florida fishermen who would also travel seasonally to other states to catch the spawning mullet. In fact, during research conducted in 1988 in Louisiana, interviews with fishermen there indicated that Florida fishermen developed the roe mullet fishery in that state.

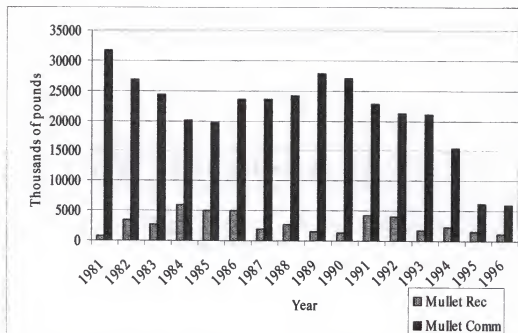


Figure 3-6. Florida Landings of Mullet for Commercial and Recreational Sectors from 1981-1996. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

Mullet had a spawning potential ratio<sup>1</sup> between 18 and 25 percent in 1992 that was below the 35 percent SPR set by the Marine Fisheries Commission. However, regulatory changes implemented in 1993 would have brought mullet out of the overfished status by

<sup>1</sup> Spawning potential ratio is a measure of the number of females capable of spawning within a particular stock of fish. It gives an indication of the health of the stock and the larger the spawning potential ratio the better the health of the stock of fish as the chances of reproducing are better.

1998-2000 (Murphy and Muller 1995). Mullet landings after the net ban and its impact are discussed in Chapter 7.

King mackerel (*Scromberomorus cavalla*) has become primarily a recreational fishery since the early 1980's (Figure 3-7). This is due in part to changes in regulations that limited the commercial catch through quotas and trip limits. Recreational fishermen have also been subjected to lower bag limits over the past decade, but landings have still increased for that sector. King mackerel are found year round in southeast and south Florida, but, only seasonally in the north.

According to genetic research there are two different stocks of king mackerel on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts of Florida. Each is subject to different regulations as the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council (GMFMC) and the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council (SAFMC) manage each of their respective stocks.

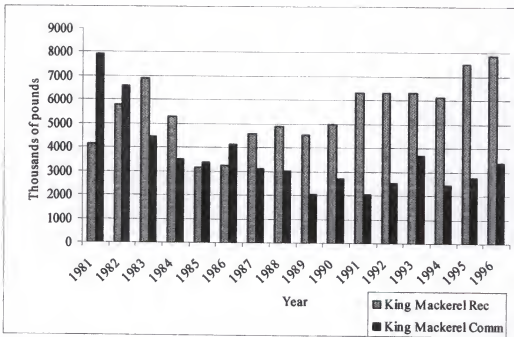


Figure 3-7. Florida Landings of King Mackerel for Commercial and Recreational Sectors from 1981-1996. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

Of the total landings, recreational fishermen for the Atlantic and Gulf coasts landed 54 percent and 82 percent respectively (Murphy and Muller 1995). King mackerel have been overfished in the past but have recovered on both coasts.

Spanish mackerel (*Scomberomorus maculatus*) has been managed under a quota and bag limits through state regulation since 1986. Federal fishery management councils implemented compatible regulations in 1987 that have brought this species out of the overfished status (Murphy and Muller 1995). As seen in Figure 3-8 this is primarily a commercial fishery with 60 percent of landings on the Atlantic coast being commercial and 82 percent of Gulf coast landings being commercially harvested. As with king mackerel there seems to be both an Atlantic stock and possibly more than one Gulf stock. Catch rates for recreational fishermen have shown a general increase with a slight decline in 1994 (Murphy and Muller 1995).

The mackerels and bluefish are pelagic which means they are ocean-going fish. Bluefish do come in close to the beach to feed and king and Spanish mackerel are also caught off docks and piers, but they are mainly fished nearshore or offshore. Mullet and sea trout are inshore species caught in the rivers, bays and nearshore areas. There are many other species of fish that are targeted by Florida's saltwater fishermen. None of the reef fish species that are caught further offshore have been included here, but are still important in terms harvest and value to the commercial and recreational fisheries.

These are the groupers (*Mycteropercae*), snappers (*Lutjanī*), porgies (*Pagri*) and other reef dwellers. They have become more important over time as consumers tastes have widened to include many species which were not popular in the past and more recreational fishermen with larger boats and motors have improved ability to reach reefs

offshore. Many reef fish species are overfished and both the state and federal management agencies have implemented regulations to limit both recreational and commercial fishermen.

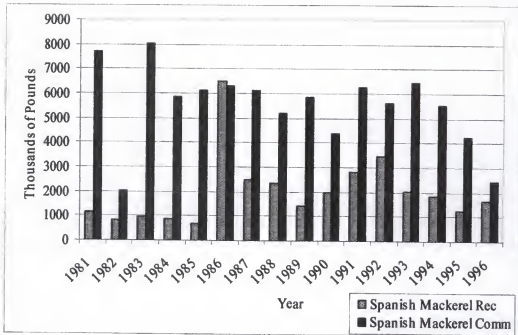


Figure 3-8. Florida landings of Spanish Mackerel for Commercial and Recreational Sectors from 1981-1996. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

There are a few Cortez commercial fishermen who fish offshore for reef fish or shrimp. In fact, one fish house has a small fleet of boats referred to as the "grouper" boats and several shrimp trawlers. Grouper boats fish for reef fish using "bandit reels" which are powered reels with several hundred feet of fishing line and several hooks on each. They range in size from 30 to 50 feet in length. These boats may fish for several days to a week before they return to the dock. The crew commonly referred to as "grouper diggers" are often not from Cortez and are often considered drifters by local residents. The offshore shrimp trawlers are larger with a range of 50 to 80 feet in length. They too will fish for several days offshore before offloading.

The majority of Cortez fishermen work primarily nearshore, the bays and estuaries for those species listed in the tables above fishing small net boats (called "kickers"), either fishing alone or with a crew of one. These boats are usually no longer than 30 feet (see description in Chapter 5).

In addition, there is also a purse seine fishery for baitfish. Purse seine vessels are larger than the "kicker" boats with a size range of 50 to 70 feet. Baitfishes are usually menhaden, Spanish sardines or thread herring and caught with large purse seines. They are usually unloaded and boxed for retail sale to recreational fishermen whole or ground up for chum.

There are other species that are allocated to recreational anglers only, like red drum (*Sciaenops ocellatus*), tarpon (*Megalops atlanticus*) and snook (*Centropomus undecimalis*). Commercial fishermen cannot target these species and must comply with the recreational bag limit restrictions. In addition, they may possess these species only without a net on board. Red drum is overfished and has been in the stages of rebuilding for close to ten years. Strict bag limits for recreational fishermen and commercial restrictions were implemented 1985. In 1986, the sale of red drum was prohibited making it an entirely recreational fishery (Schlesinger 1999).

### **Sarasota Bay Fishing Trends**

It is difficult to assess fishing trends for an area like Sarasota Bay because data are not collected in such detail to provide catch statistics for either commercial or recreational fishermen. The Sarasota Bay National Estuary Program (1992) did attempt to assess these fisheries resources. Because of limited commercial data, the report focused upon survey research conducted for the recreational sector and a brief report on landings data for the commercial fishery.

Manatee County's total commercial finfish landings in 1986 were 15.6 million pounds and were dominated by menhaden (*Brevoortia tyrannus*) landings of 12.3 million pounds, with black mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) landings of just over 3 million pounds. Total landings for that year were second only to Gulf County, which had landings of 17.4 million pounds. Sarasota County landings were far less but, that can be accounted for as the majority of fish caught in the bay are landed in Cortez. By 1990, there were significant drops in landings of Spanish sardines (*Sardinella aurita*) and red grouper (*Epinephelus morio*). Mullet (*Mugil cephalus*) remained stable with landings of 3.1 million pounds. Spotted seatrout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*) commercial landings also showed some decline, but could be attributed to many different factors (Edwards 1992).

The two species that are most likely indicative of overall fishery trends within Sarasota Bay are spotted sea trout (*Cynoscion nebulosus*) and black mullet (*Mugil cephalus*). Mullet landings peaked at around 6 million pounds in 1957, 1965, and 1969 with a low of around 2 million pounds in 1976. Overall, there has been a decline in commercial landings since the early 1950s. The same is true of spotted seatrout with peak landings of 430,000 pounds in 1951 to average landings of around 100,000 pounds during the 1980's (Edwards 1992).

The trend in recreational fishery is similar. Although the data are sparse comparing catch rates for spotted seatrout from the most recent survey with earlier studies it is obvious that catch rates have declined dramatically (Edwards 1992).

The reasons behind this decline are complex, but it is important to note that during the timeframe for the declines in these two commercial fisheries, the population of the two county area increased tenfold from 64,000 in 1950 to 490,000 in 1990. The

environmental impacts of such population growth have been documented before and therefore it is likely that such an increase in population along Sarasota Bay has had similar impacts (Edwards, 1992). Those impacts range from shifting patterns in harvest, i.e., spotted seatrout, where the recreational sector increases its harvest to impacts upon the environment from destruction of habitat, i.e., building of seawalls, removal of mangroves, increased storm water runoff, etc. It is likely that both the recreational and commercial fisheries of Sarasota Bay have contributed to the declines in fisheries, especially those like spotted seatrout. However, it is also likely that the main contributors to the decline in fisheries are environmental changes, especially loss of habitat. Sarasota Bay has lost 20-30 percent of its seagrasses, 39 percent of its wetlands, and 78 percent of its natural shoreline. With these types of environmental impacts, there will be a subsequent decline in fisheries (Edwards, 1992).

### **Marine Fisheries Regulation**

Florida fishermen, both commercial and recreational are subject to both federal and state laws when fishing. Florida has jurisdiction from shore to three miles of their coastline along the Atlantic coast and nine miles on the Gulf coast. Outside of state jurisdiction, Federal fishery management councils create rules and regulations implemented by the National Marine Fisheries Service in what is called the Exclusive Economic Zone, which extends 200 miles from state waters. Florida fisheries regulations, as with most coastal states in the Gulf and South Atlantic, are enforced through cooperative agreements between the Florida Marine Patrol, National Marine Fisheries Service Enforcement, and the Coast Guard. The state of Florida, the Gulf and South Atlantic Fishery Management Councils, the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission and the National Marine Fisheries Service all cooperate to implement laws

that are not redundant or contradictory to one another. However, the vested interest of any one of the management agencies can supersede the others and create incompatible or different regulations for the fishing public. These laws usually take the form of a fishery management plan which can encompass one or more species. The plans are often directed toward a species group, but action can be taken to remedy problems with one species that may require special attention.

Until recently, laws created by the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC) regulated Florida's saltwater fishermen. The Florida Legislature created the Commission in 1983 with rule-making authority over marine life, with the exception of endangered species. All rules, however, would need to receive final approval from the Governor and Cabinet. The FMFC consisted of seven commissioners appointed by the Governor and approved by the State Senate. Members of the FMFC served four-year terms. Prior to the establishment of the Commission, fisheries regulation was undertaken by local authorities, which by 1983 had established over 220 local laws concerning saltwater fishing. Once established, the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission reviewed these local laws and they were either repealed or continued in effect. Since its inception, the FMFC has implemented at least 500 distinct saltwater fishing regulations approved by the Governor and Cabinet.

The FMFC was originally made up of individuals from both the recreational and commercial sectors that had some interest in the fisheries being managed. In later years, appointees from the commercial sector were seldom appointed. This issue was often alluded to by those from the commercial sector as an inequity within the rule-making process. Others from the recreational sector considered the participation of those from



the commercial sector to be in direct conflict with the rule-making process since they had an economic interest in the outcome. Nevertheless, because rules needed approval from the Governor and Cabinet, it provided the commercial sector with an opportunity to challenge the FMFC through lobbying efforts at the Cabinet level. This opportunity for political maneuvering became an important issue during the Save Our Sealife campaign which would ban the use of entanglement nets in state waters and the more recent joining of the State's freshwater and saltwater fishery management agencies.

The commercial fishing industry's relationship with the FMFC at that time was very reminiscent of Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FFWCC) and its relationship to inland commercial fisheries that was reported by Gibson-Carpenter (1992) and her study of alligator hunters. In her dissertation she examines the ban on various commercial gear types which eventually put most commercial fishermen who fished inland waters out of business. The dynamics of how those regulations came about are very similar to the state of affairs between commercial fishermen and the marine fisheries management agency prior to the net ban. The FFWCC, at that time, was under strong pressure from recreational interests to ban commercial fishing in lakes and rivers. Similarly, agency personnel who had conducted assessments were reporting that commercial fishing could continue without having a deleterious impact upon fish stocks if regulated properly. These reports did not appease the recreational fishing interest groups and some agency personnel were forced to leave the agency under pressure from those associations according to one informant (Gibson-Carpenter 1992). The agency eventually banned the use of most commercial gear for freshwater fishing.

### **Social Environment**

With its steadily increasing population, Florida's social environment has provided the backdrop for significant changes in the state. The destination for the majority of that population has been along its coast. There has also been a trend toward a more urban and an older population. The combination of all these factors has had its impact upon Florida's natural resources and the communities that depend upon them, like Cortez.

#### **Florida Population Trends and Demographics**

Florida's population has seen steady growth over the last century. In 1920 the state's population was 968,470 according to the census for that year. By 1990 that number had grown to 12,937,930 and by 2000 was well over 15 million (Figure 3-9). Most of that growth has been concentrated along the coastline. The number of individuals who live in Florida's coastal counties has increased at a rate much faster than that for noncoastal counties as seen in Figure 3-10. While just fewer than sixty percent (59.0) of the population lived in coastal counties in 1920, that percentage grew to almost eighty percent (79.3) in 1970 before dropping slightly in 1980 (78.6). That percentage is projected to continue to drop through the year 2020. However, the coastal population is projected to reach over 15 million by the year 2020 (Florida Coastal Management Program 1997).

Related to the general increase in coastal population are two other important demographics. The first is an increasing population density for coastal counties; a rate much faster than that for the rest of the state. The other is an increasing trend toward urbanization of the state. Coastal counties had a population density of 19.03 persons per square mile in 1920. That number increased to 335.21 by 1990. That compares to 16.45 persons per square mile in 1920 to 119.04 in 1990 for non-coastal counties.

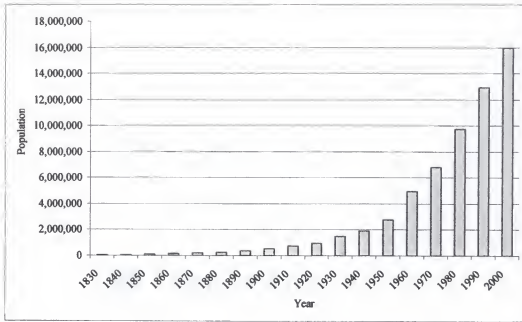


Figure 3-9. Florida's Total Population from 1830-2000. Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000.

Furthermore, in 1920 fifty-one percent of those living in coastal counties lived in urban areas, by 1990 that figure had risen to 90 percent (Florida Coastal Management Program 1997). The reasons for that shift are varied, but include general growth in urban areas and also migration from rural areas to urban. This shift toward urbanization is important because most, if not all, fishing communities in Florida began as relatively isolated rural communities. These demographic changes have certainly had an impact upon most coastal communities, many of which were or are still dependent upon commercial fishing as an important source of income.

#### **Manatee County and Cortez Population Trends and Demographics**

Manatee County like most coastal counties in Florida has experienced its share of growth. The county's population in 1930 was 22,502 with a median age of 25.4. The 2000 census indicated a population of 264,002 with a median age of 43.6. The change in

median age is an important statistic that indicates of the importance of Florida as a retirement destination for many retirees from throughout the United States.

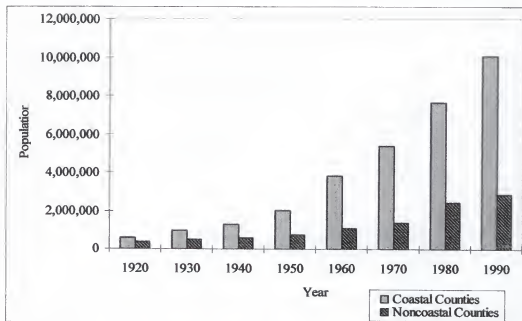


Figure 3-10. Florida Coastal County and Noncoastal County Population from 1920 to 1990. Source: Florida Coastal Management Program 1997.

Coastal counties, like Manatee, are most likely the preferred destination for those retiring to the state as they have seen the most growth over the years. Coastal counties are also the preferred destination for other seasonal residents within the state. Manatee County had approximately 20,000 seasonal residents in 1987 that accounted for between 16-18 percent of the population. A 1987 survey of visitors to Manatee County found that the majority of seasonal visitors were from Midwestern states and that 56 percent of foreign visitors were from Canada. Another 14 percent and 12 percent of foreign visitors were from Germany and England respectively (Clarke Advertising 1987).

The increasing population of retirees along with the large number of seasonal residents has important implications for the economic base of the county. According to the 1997 economic census, Figure 3-11 shows that personal income from fishing during

1984-1997 has fluctuated considerably, but has dropped most recently from previous years. In contrast, personal income from the service sector has seen a constant increase and is far and above the dollar value of fishing as seen in Figure 3-12.

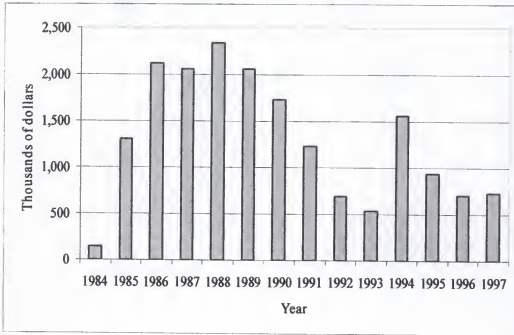


Figure 3-11. Manatee County Personal Income from Fishing for 1984 through 1997.  
Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000.

### **Cortez Population and Demographics**

These demographic changes in Manatee County have certainly affected Cortez. In 1887, a General Directory for Manatee County listed 49 heads of households and of those, 33 were listed as fishermen (Manatee County Historical Records Library). In 1920, the census found a population of 290 individuals in Cortez with 66 of those people employed as fishermen. The 1990 census classifies Cortez as a Census Designated Place and its entire population of 4,509 as urban. That population dropped slightly in the latest census with a population of 4,491 in 2000. In addition, the 1990 census found of those persons 16 years and over 58 were employed in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, falling

in 2000 to 39. The median age for Cortez in 1990 was 65.3 dropping slightly to 62.5 in 2000 (U.S. Census Bureau 2000).

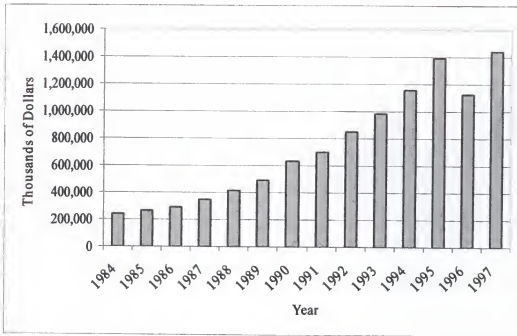


Figure 3-12. Manatee County Personal Income from Service Industries for 1984 through 1997. Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2000.

Cortez like many coastal communities in Florida has seen the steady advance of urban sprawl as a result of the increasing population within Manatee County. The once unpaved road from Bradenton is now four lanes to the Cortez city limit with numerous businesses along the way catering to tourists and seasonal residents. With the construction of the bridge to Anna Maria Island in the 1920s Cortez no longer was the destination at the end of the road, but one of many neighborhoods to pass on the way to the beach. It is ironic when tourists' visiting Cortez for the first time comment that they never realized the community was located where it is. They never made the association that "Cortez Road" led to Cortez.

Although the U.S. Census Bureau lists the population of Cortez as 4,491, it is unlikely that older Cortesians would consider the community to be that large. For the majority of those who consider themselves "native" to Cortez, the community is much smaller. The original community center is south of Cortez Road where the fish houses are located, on the working waterfront. There are some who do not include those who reside to the north of Cortez Road as residents of the historic community. However, several key figures within the history of the community do reside there. The 2000 census lists 3,308 households in Cortez, but the historic village consists of less than 200. To the north of Cortez Road there have been several recent developments that include condominiums, in addition to single-family homes. To the east of Cortez, along Cortez Road toward Bradenton, several trailer park communities have been developed and are most likely included in the census of Cortez. Neither of these developments is considered to be part of the historic village. In fact, most individuals who reside in these developments would not consider themselves residents of Cortez, but more likely Bradenton. Many of these residents are seasonal and live in other states out of "season." The "season" begins in late October and lasts until March; it is the period when most seasonal visitors come to the area to escape the colder climate of their customary residence.

The high median age for Cortez is characteristic of the migration of retirees to this area. It may also be an indication of changes in the historic village that relate to a process sometimes referred to as "gentrification." The process of gentrification relates to the increasing value of property as individuals of higher socio-economic class begin to move into an area and acquire land (Gale 1991). In addition, these individuals are usually from

a different part of the state or nation and do not share the same attachment to the landscape or community that comes from long-term residence. It becomes increasingly difficult for younger members of the community to buy or rent property, which further makes their ability to stay within the historic village less likely. Within the community of Cortez rents reflect this change as I found out when looking for a place to reside during my stay in the community. Rents were commonly quoted at \$700 to \$1000 a month for a house within the village. This is not unexpected when beach property just over the bridge can bring that or even more in season.

Many of the community's younger residents are able to stay within the village because of their kinship ties to property owners. My own stay in the village was possible because a fisherman, who owned property within the village, charged me considerably less than the going rate for housing in the community. For the most part, the younger fishermen in Cortez do not reside in the historic village, but often outside the community. This is becoming an increasingly common pattern of residence in communities with economies dependent upon tourism (Oliver-Smith et al. 1989).

Not only has the demographic shift brought an older population to Cortez and the surrounding community, but also more often than not, these new seasonal and permanent residents are of a different economic class. Although most are not as wealthy as those who reside in the exclusive areas of Longboat Key, they are more likely of a higher socioeconomic class than most native Cortesians and local fishermen. This is an important demographic because along with the higher socioeconomic class comes a higher education level and other resources which offer an advantage when participating in local political and economic spheres.



Cortez, like so many other coastal fishing communities has endured significant change that comes from a steadily growing population within the state. Those changes come in the form of environmental change and social change and have far reaching impacts for the community's survival. Because it is dependent upon natural resources for its economic base, if natural resources are unsustainable for whatever reason, then Cortez as a fishing community will likely also be unsustainable.

## CHAPTER 4 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF CORTEZ AND COMMERCIAL FISHING

### **Prehistory**

Archaeological data indicate the waters surrounding Cortez were likely fished by indigenous hunter/fisher-gatherers prior to the Spanish exploration of Florida. The number of shell mounds along Florida's Central and Southwest Gulf Coast confirms that groups like the Timucuan, Tocobaga and Calusa exploited the plentiful marine resources in the region possibly as early as 5,000 B.C. (Matthews 1983). These prehistoric inhabitants had highly stratified societies governed by chiefs who often created alliances through marriage and polygamy. There is archaeological evidence of permanent housing and villages with populations in the hundreds. Warfare existed between these regional groups with the Calusa being the most important in population size and political organization (Marquardt 1986). The Timucuan to the North and the Calusa to the South bordered the Tocobaga who resided near present day Cortez.

The abundant marine resources for these coastal residents have been noted in many historic documents. One Spaniard held captive as a slave commented upon the fishing prowess of the Tocobaga saying they never lacked fresh fish (Matthews 1983). Remains from shell middens have indicated that the fish and shellfish harvested from the nearshore waters were important resources for these coastal groups who may also have practiced horticulture. Bones and other material from shell mounds suggest seasonal fluctuations in the harvest of certain species of fish coincided with spawning activity as does the

contemporary use of many species. However, it is not clear whether the same species, such as mullet, were being exploited by these early hunter/fishers as they are by present day fishermen. Using spears, traps, and weirs fish were taken from dry rock enclosures built at low tide. There is also evidence of fishing nets with shell sinkers being used by indigenous fishermen (Marquardt 1986).

### **Early Spanish Fisheries**

It is likely that DeSoto was the first European explorer to arrive, in what is now Manatee County, in the year 1538 following Narvaez who earlier had landed to the north close to Tampa Bay. DeSoto, landing at what is now called Shaw's Point, spent a brief time in the area since it showed little promise of the riches he sought and the Indians seemed hostile. Indeed, another Spanish commander, Menendez, later attempted to create peace between these warring factions and tried to establish outposts in both Calusa and Tocobaga lands. Both attempts eventually failed and in the end Menendez advocated the removal of the Indians in *la Florida*. This would prove unnecessary for by the mid 1700's most of the Tocobaga, Ocita, Calusa and Timucuan had disappeared, succumbing to disease and destruction at the hands of the Spanish. It was later that the Seminole moved into the area (Matthews 1983).

While the Spanish were unable to establish permanent settlements in the area they did make use of the plentiful marine resources. They traded with the Indians and eventually sent boats from Havana to fish the area waters. By 1769 there were estimated to be 300-400 Spanish fishermen along the Southwest coast using nets made of silk grass (Matthews 1983:68). They established temporary camps called "ranchos" with thatched huts that were used to dry and salt fish, but also had gardens and citrus groves. These camps dotted the shoreline and were noted by British officials that were surveying the

coast. There was some concern about the Spanish and Indian trade by early colonial authorities but it was allowed to continue for the time (Matthews 1983).

### **Capt. Bunce's Fishery**

In 1834 Capt. William Bunce who had arrived from Key West was appointed justice of the peace for the newly established Hillsborough County. He quickly entered into the fishing business and established a rancho near Shaw's Point on the Manatee River. His business rapidly grew and he soon had over thirty thatched-roofed huts on his rancho. Business was lucrative keeping the Havana markets supplied with fish and roe. Bunce was not the only party interested in these bounteous resources. At the time there were at least six other ships in the area working the local waters from Charlotte Harbor to Tampa Bay. These ships had the capability to deliver live fish to Havana for they had wells filled with salt water on board to keep fish as fresh as possible. Bunce employed a number of Spanish and Spanish Indians in the fishery that would later prove troublesome as the American government tried to expel the Indians from the State as tensions grew between the two. He was forced to move his rancho several times and finally saw it destroyed by the U.S. Army shortly before he died (Matthews 1983).

The frontier that Bunce pioneered was changing rapidly, people were steadily moving to the area. To the east of Bunce's original rancho on the Manatee River the village of Braidentown would soon be established, and shortly after the fishing camp to the south at Hunter's Point would soon attract more than itinerant fishermen.

### **Hunter's Point Fishery**

The first documentation of a fishery located near present day Cortez (then called Hunter's Point) appeared with the United States Commission of Fish and Fisheries report for the year 1880. In that report Silas Stearns called the Hunter's Point fishery one of the

most important fisheries on the coast although only eighteen fishermen were employed there. Many of the fishermen were reported to be "Conchs,"<sup>1</sup> the rest apparently American-born. Stearns described two seines being used at the fishery, one being 100 fathoms long, the other 75 fathoms long. Cast nets were also used but only in shallow water. Two sizes of boats were being operated in the fishery, the larger boat which carried the seine was approximately 29 feet in length, the smaller boats used to tend the net were 16 feet in length. All had a shallow draft and were said to "be better built than the average" (Stearns 1887:543).

An abundance of fish and good catches for the year were reported with 10,000 pound recounted in one particularly memorable haul. In fact, the fish were so plentiful that they were said to make a thunderous noise day and night as they leaped from the water.<sup>2</sup> In one account there were so many fish in the seine that with a surge the bulging net was carried away from the fishermen (Stearns 1887).

The Cuban markets at the time were paying four cents for salt fish and fifty cents a dozen for dried roe. After costs the owners of the fishery apparatus received 15 percent, owners of the vessel taking fish to Cuba received 20 percent and the remainder went to the crew. Each crewmember received one share with boys receiving a half; the captain received a share and a half (Stearns 1887).

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<sup>1</sup> Conchs were fishermen, originally from England, who had migrated from the Bahamas to Key West. They were thought to have little education and therefore suffered much discrimination at the hands of other fishermen.

<sup>2</sup> A fisherman made this same claim from Cedar Key in an interview conducted in 1990 as he described the mullet in his early days as a fisherman that "made such a racket at night that you could not sleep at night."

Stearns reported several buildings owned by Sweetzer and Thompson at the Hunter's Point fishery to accommodate the fishing. One large building, thirty feet long, was for the curing of fish and stood on pilings away from the shore. Two others buildings, one for cooking and dining, with a room for the captain's family and another the crew's quarters, were near the larger building. The former was of wooden plank construction while the latter was palmetto thatch. Seine reels for drying nets and racks for drying fish were also present. Boat ways for the repair and maintenance of fishing vessels were near the shore. These were temporary homes, as the fishermen apparently would spend only three or four months at the fishery (Stearns 1887).

#### **North Carolina Fishermen arrive in Cortez**

It was not until the late 1800's when the first migrants from North Carolina whose descendants comprise most of Cortez's present day fishing population settled in Hunter's Point. With the advent of rail transportation travel had become much easier. The newly completed railway from the East coast to Cedar Key made Florida's West coast more accessible to sojourners from the Northeast. Steamers plying the waterways provided convenient transportation for those wishing to venture south. Soon the railway was extended to Tampa and the migration south began with fervor.

According to Green (n.d.) three Fulford brothers, Billy, Nathan and Sanders along with James E. Guthrie and Charles Jones were some of the first to travel from Carteret County, North Carolina to Florida and eventually build homes on Hunter's Point. These men and their families had moved from Perico Island where they had settled after moving from Cedar Key. The land was purchased from Allen and Mary Gardiner who were originally from New York State. Of the original homes built on Hunter's Point only three

remain today. William Fulford built two of the remaining homes and the other built by Nate Fulford (Green n.d.).

According to a county directory by 1897 there were at least forty-nine people living in the village of Hunter's Point and thirty-three of them were fishermen. Mrs. S.J.C. Bratton was listed as postmaster for the village.<sup>3</sup> The Brattons were early residents of Hunter's Point and evidently owned a considerable amount of real estate. They built Bratton's store and later added more rooms to accommodate guests. At one point the Brattons rented the store to Jesse Burton but continued to maintain the hotel and docks. They later named the entire complex the Albion Inn.<sup>4</sup> The Brattons left the area around 1912 and sold the hotel, which eventually came under the ownership of J.O. Guthrie.<sup>5</sup>

There were two fish houses located on the waterfront by 1906 and several net camps and spreads. Net camps were set out away from shore on pilings and used to store spare nets that were used seasonally. They were also sleeping quarters for bachelor fishermen. These unmarried fishermen "boarded" with families in the village, their meals

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<sup>3</sup> This demographic information was listed in a directory for Manatee County written by Andrew E. Meserve of Braidentown, Florida. The three Fulford brothers, James E. Guthrie, Charles Jones are all listed. Sanders Fulford is listed as a hotel operator and Charles Jones is listed as Capt. and master.

<sup>4</sup> The building became an important symbol to community activists when the U.S. Coast Guard decided to demolish the hotel. It was said to have no historic value and to be infested with termites by the Coast Guard. In spite of efforts by the local historical society and other activists the Coast Guard demolished the building. They did, however, allow the original store/Post Office to be salvaged. Often referred to as Jesse Burton's Store it now sits across from the A. P. Bell Fish Co. awaiting a home and renovation.

<sup>5</sup> According to Green (1985) the Bratton's sold the hotel to the Cheatem sisters who several years later sold it to the Edney sisters. When Joe Guthrie married Bessie Edney, it was given to the newly married couple as a wedding present.

being provided, including a lunch to be taken with them while fishing. A native of Cortez, Paul Taylor remembers his mother used to have boarders:

Some of the boys that was fishin' around here they would sleep....they used to have little buildings all up and down this shore here and the boys would keep a little bunk in there to sleep on. And they would come up to the house and get their meals at the house there. And my mother used to have three or four boarders like that. Fix their lunch for 'em, you know, to carry fishin' with them.<sup>6</sup>

Green (n.d.) has stated that the Brattons donated land for a community church to be built around the turn of the century. Both the present day Church of Christ and the Church of God used the building after it was erected; one used it in the morning and the other at night. Both religious groups in Cortez were formed during the fundamentalist revival of the 1920's. The Church of God and the Church of Christ believe in a literal translation of the bible. Services within the Church of Christ are reserved allowing no musical instruments, only a cappella singing. Their counterparts interpreted the bible in a slightly different manner choosing a more Pentecostal style. They were referred to as "holy rollers" because of their raucous services with loud music and speaking in tongues.

Other vestiges of civilization were making inroads into the fishing community. A one-room schoolhouse was built in 1896 to provide an education for Cortez residents. That building still stands today, presently being used as a residence (Green n.d.).

The village continued to grow with a population of 110 by 1910. The dirt road to Bradenton had been paved with shells from a nearby shell mound in the early 1900's. The one room schoolhouse was sold and a new larger brick school building was constructed in 1912, one of six new schools in Manatee County at the time. A new general store appeared on the shoreline run by M.F. Brown. There were still two fish

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<sup>6</sup> Oral history with Paul Taylor, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.



houses on the waterfront; one was located on the Albion Inn hotel dock owned by J.O. Guthrie and run by the Hibb's Fish Company from Tampa. The other was set on pilings away from the shore; it was owned by Jess Williams but leased to John Saverese who delivered his fish to Sarasota.<sup>7</sup>

A town meeting held at M. F. Brown's store on June 8, 1912 was for the purpose of electing officials and designating Cortez as the official village name (Green n.d.).<sup>8</sup> The community was becoming less and less a frontier-fishing outpost. The environment still made life unpleasant, though. Hordes of mosquitoes and disease plagued the small coastal village, which saw outbreaks of malaria and other disease. A flu epidemic in 1918 killed several people. Water was scarce at times with rainwater tanks providing the only freshwater. It was not until L.J.C. Bratton put in the first artesian well at the Albion Inn that a reliable supply of water was available (Green 1985).

Early fishing boats were called "skipjacks." Skipjacks were small wooden plank boats, probably no longer than 16 ft. guided by poling oars. They had a rounded bottom with a centerboard and a place for a mast so that sails could be erected and used when traveling long distances. Masts were removable so as not to impede the fishing operation. The rudder was also removable so that it would not be in the way as the net was pulled from the aft of the boat. Racing skipjacks was a favorite pastime of fishermen

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<sup>7</sup> Oral history with Orie Williams, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>8</sup> The community had earlier been designated Cortez by a postal official in 1888, however, the name may not have been popular. Some speculate that the official was misinformed and had assumed that the Spanish explorer Cortez had landed nearby rather than DeSoto. The name Hunter's Point also has a mysterious history with some early residents claiming it was named so for its good hunting. However, it is more likely that a prominent family named Hunter who lived in the area owned the land.

from Cortez when they were not working. Only a few remember actually seeing the early sailboats and they tell stories of the lighter side of life in Cortez:

But sailboats I don't recall too much because they were almost extinct by the time that I got up big enough to run around the docks. But I remember seeing a few of them, yes. I'd hear my father talk about 'em and one of the greatest sports in Cortez for the grown men in the early ages was racing sailboats.

My father told me that they had two fellas that were hard to beat. But I'm happy to say that my daddy was considered the top notch in racing....But that was Mr. Alvee Taylor and Mr. Willis Adams; he said they were heavy contenders....They had a starting point right in front of Cortez and they would cross the bay towards the island. They had a marker to go around on the island side and they would race. Twenty-five cents [that was the prize].<sup>9</sup>

Fishermen worked in crews, usually four boats together. Each crewmember would set his net around the fish joining the opposite end of another fisherman's net. At one end of the net a pole was attached which was stuck in the bay bottom to hold the net vertically in place. Each fisherman would attach the end of their net to the other's pole completing a circle around the fish. Seines and gill nets were both used by fishermen. Seines had a small mesh and fish were unable to swim through the net. A tighter and tighter circle was made in a shallow area with the net so that fish could be bailed from within the circle eventually. With gill nets fish would "gill" in the net as they tried to swim through. The mesh is too small for them to pass and their gills prevent them from backing out. Smaller fish pass through, while larger fish became entangled in the net.

Nets were made of cotton and were spread on drying racks after a days fishing or they would rot. Lime was used to clean and preserve the net, killing the destructive bacteria. Before the net was hauled onto the spreads, lime was mixed with saltwater and

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<sup>9</sup> Oral history with Orie Williams, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

poured over the net as it lay in the back of the boat. Historic photographs of the Cortez harbor show large net spreads and reels with waves of white net drying.

### **The 1921 Hurricane**

By 1920 the population of Cortez had grown to 290 with 65 heads of household and 66 persons engaged in fishing.<sup>10</sup> A sign of the times had appeared with the construction of a wooden bridge to Anna Maria Island. The Florida boom was in progress and more and more people were coming to the area. A steady stream of migrating fishermen and other family members from North Carolina continued to make Cortez their destination. Prospects for the sleepy little village were looking up, but not for long.

The year 1921 is important for many older residents of Cortez for that was the year of "the big one." The 1921 hurricane destroyed most of the Cortez waterfront; the Albion Inn was the only waterfront building to survive. Green (n.d.) explains that time is still reckoned by some of the older residents as before or after the hurricane, even after seventy years have passed. Sarasota was also hit hard by the '21 hurricane, but unlike Cortez, never rebuilt its waterfront and today all remnants of the fishing village that once was there have disappeared. Orie Williams, a former resident of Cortez, described what he remembers after the hurricane:

The shoreline, generally speaking, was covered with net racks for drying the nets after being used. Then they had what they called camps....Those were all blown down and washed down. And so, there were a lot of nets of various descriptions all in an entanglement around the posts that survived, just stickin' up. The buildings didn't survive, but numerous posts they were resting upon were still there with all this entanglement. They had to get in there and salvage....Some boats were hurtin' pretty bad.

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<sup>10</sup> From the fourteenth census of the United States--Precinct 13, Manatee County, Florida.

But generally speaking, the fishermen in Cortez didn't suffer much with their boats, as an all over picture, because they, so to speak, "smelled it coming." So, they took precautionary measures with their boats. Some of the flat bottom boat types, they would sink 'em so the waves would wash over 'em and wouldn't bother 'em. But in the storm of '21 there were hardly any flat bottom boats. Prior to the motorization of those fishing boats, it was sail. They called them skipjacks.<sup>11</sup>

The community began the arduous task of rebuilding, salvaging what they could. They rebuilt the waterfront from new and salvaged materials. Two outsiders who ran the fish houses, Henry Hibbs and John Savarese, never rebuilt in Cortez. Local villagers like "Judge" Millis who opened Star Fish Co. and Jess Williams who reopened the Fish House quickly filled the void (Green 1985). Within a matter of years the Cortez docks looked much as they did before the hurricane. The bridge to the island was completed in 1922 and a new era for the region was ushered in; recreational tourism would grow like never before. Starting with a few thousand "tin can tourists" it would culminate with high-rise condominiums and millions of visitors to the area each year.

Tin Can Tourists were labeled such because they brought most of their provisions with them as they traveled. Sleeping in their trucks or rooming in the village they ate the canned food they had brought with them. Local historian Doris Green remembers the early tourists:

Tin Can, as they liked to say: "They brought all of their food supplies with them, a five dollar bill and a pair of pants and didn't change either one of them while they were here." Of course, back in those times there were no trailer parks or anything and they would just room, if a person had a spare room. They'd put in a little kerosene cook stove, a bed and they'd be set up for the winter.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Oral history with Orie Williams, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>12</sup> Oral history with Doris Green, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

Tourism was a part of Cortez from its inception. Many seasonal visitors who have been coming to the village for decades are considered a part of the community.

However, later arrivals to the area around Cortez were not as welcome.

One technological innovation introduced just prior to the hurricane inaugurated a change that would transform commercial fishing forever. With the introduction of motors, one and two cylinder engines quickly replaced sails for powering boats. Nate Fulford was the first to place a motor in his boat, the Ethel; it had a 4 HP Barker engine with no muffler (Green n.d.:27). Retired fisherman Paul Taylor remembers the transition and especially the motors:

I can remember them ole' Myannis Engines with 5 horse they called it. Then what they called a 7 1/2 horse. My father had two boats. On the smallest one he had the 5 horse and he used it more than he did the other one. That was an old boat. Finally ended up one time puttin' a 4 cylinder Star motor in the boat. It was kinda like a 4 cylinder, like a T Model 4 engine.<sup>13</sup>

One can only imagine how quickly life changed with the introduction of motors. Daily life in the quiet fishing village had to be altered as residents were roused from their early morning sleep as fishermen fired up their new engines. Other forms of transportation like steamers would soon disappear and trucks would deliver products to the Tampa markets.

Any change in Cortez seemed to meet with some challenge. Whether this resistance was a matter of convention or for other reasons is not clear. In the case of fishing gear, it may have meant better access to the resource when new and more effective fishing gear was introduced. Whatever the reason, some change was resisted

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<sup>13</sup> Oral history with Paul Taylor, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

more than others. Stopnetting was introduced in the 1920's, but never became popular until later. It was a method of fishing using as much as 10,000 yards of net, enough to encircle a small island or stop the mouth of a small river. Several skiffs were towed behind a larger motorized launch to haul the many sections of net. Crews were made up of as many as eight men. The net was set at high tide with shallow nets closer to shore. As the tide would go out, the fish that were often in the shallow water were forced into the deeper holes that were then surrounded with the deeper nets. This method of fishing was very controversial when it was introduced. So controversial that it initiated a feud between the hook and line fishermen and the stop-netters in the village. The feud reached its climax when fisherman Joe Fulford, who had been very vocal about his dislike of stopnetting, had a stick of dynamite explode beneath his house. Luckily, he was not injured and three men were arrested. They were later released and Joe moved back to North Carolina. Cortez native Raymond Guthrie remembers the controversy over new fishing methods introduced by his father:

He started seine fishin' and they all got mad at him 'cause he was seine-fishin', poured ashes onto his seine and ruined it. Then they started stop nettin' and they started raisin' sand about that too. Didn't like that. But then after everybody switched over and started doin' these type of things then everything was alright. I couldn't recall, Fulford. I don't remember his first name. He lived up there where Dutch lives now. He was a hook and liner and he was all the time fussin' about stop-netters and about everybody in general was hook and line-fishin'. And somebody took a stick of dynamite and put it onto a fishin' pole, shoved it under his bed one night and made a wreck out of the room but it didn't hurt him. Shortly after that he moved back to Carolina.<sup>14</sup>

Motors were not only used to power launches. The backbreaking work of pulling a net or seine full of fish made the introduction of "donkey boats" a welcome invention.

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<sup>14</sup> Oral history with Raymond Guthrie, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

Donkey boats were ordinary skiffs with an engine placed in the middle. By attaching a truck transmission and adding a "cathead" the motor does all the work hauling the net into the boat. This was especially welcome with stop-netting crews who had as much as ten thousand yards of wet net to pull in.

### **The Depression**

The dramatic events on Wall Street preceding the Depression era were somewhat baffling to many Cortez residents. They experienced no great decline in their economic futures, except that life was made a little bit harder. The lack of money was the most difficult. Utility bills and other debts were left unpaid leaving many without the newest luxury for this frontier outpost, electricity.<sup>15</sup> However, most villagers still had their kerosene lamps and lanterns. Fishermen were being paid only a few cents a pound for mullet, little more than their predecessors of the century before (Green n.d.). Stargill Pringle, Cortez native and commercial fisherman remembers that day well:

And when I was a little boy my daddy was in business in the early '20s with a fella named Shreck from up north. When the stock market crash came October 29, 1929 my dad had \$800 in the bank. Immediately the next morning we were broke. And we stayed broke until well up in the '40s. Wiped out.<sup>16</sup>

One interesting item of local folklore originated during the Depression. It has been said that Ripley's Believe It or Not featured Cortez as being the only town in the United States that never received any governmental aid during the entire Depression. The older residents claim it was because they could always catch fish or harvest shellfish in the

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<sup>15</sup> Neriah Taylor, a local boat builder was the first to have electricity in his newly built home and boatworks in the year 1925.

<sup>16</sup> Oral history with Stargill Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute of Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.



shallow waters of Sarasota Bay just south of the Cortez docks called the "Kitchen." You could always find something to eat, as Paul Taylor will attest:

That's one thing, during the Depression. I heard 'em talkin' about it. People talkin' about, saying Cortez was the only place in the State that didn't ask for relief....Because during the Depression we had plenty of fish to eat. We had plenty of clams, and along them days we had plenty of scallops, plenty of oysters. And you could go to the store for \$2.50 and get all the good black-eyed peas and whiteside bacon and a sack of flour and a little bit of lard and you was fixed. You could eat for two or three weeks now.<sup>17</sup>

Another native of Cortez, Doris Green concurs that they always had something to eat during the Depression, but assures that it was no picnic. She also challenges the often-told story of no government relief for Cortez:

Of course, we did not have much to spare as far as food was concerned. But we've always been helpful to each other when people needed help. But, as I told in my book, that story that I do not think it's true that Cortez was the only village or town in the whole country that did not receive welfare. I think that's just a good story that somebody made up. But we were not plush with anything. I'll tell you. It was hard, hard times. We just patched clothes and put paper in our shoes and went right on. It was not an easy time.<sup>18</sup>

Times were made even harder when the mullet disappeared. Shortly after the start of the Depression mullet became scarce and it was almost impossible to make a living from fishing. No one could explain why they did not show up in their usual abundance. Many fishermen were forced to find other work or move to other fishing communities, but they eventually returned.

In 1932, the dealers in Cortez were paying a cent and a half a pound for mullet. When they decided to lower the price to a cent a pound the fishermen went on strike.

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<sup>17</sup> Oral History with Paul Taylor, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>18</sup> Oral History with Doris Green, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.



The strike lasted only a few days as the dealers brought the price back up to a cent and a half. Everyone went back to work, but these times were hard. Everyone knew that even the dealers were not making money during the Depression. In fact several fish houses in Cortez went under during that era. There were other one and two day strikes in Cortez that ended with prices being raised, something that would eventually change.

### **World War II and a New Era of Organization**

As with the rest of the nation, World War II was an apprehensive time for the village of Cortez. More than 65 men and women from the community had either been drafted or joined some branch of military service. Three men from Cortez were killed in action during the war. Those at home were never lacking for reminders of the war. Sarasota Bay south of Cortez was used as a bombing range for training pilots. Several Cortez fishermen told stories of rescuing downed pilots or watching as their planes crashed into the bay. For those who served it is vital memory and relived again and again through the many stories told. Village residents have often mentioned plans to list all those who served on a memorial wall to be painted on one side of a local fish house.

A few fishermen were allowed deferment because they were food producers. Catches were good during the war years with one as large as 60,000 pounds in one set. In 1945 Florida produced a record 55 million pounds of mullet. With so many fish and insufficient manpower, women and young boys and girls were recruited into the fishery being paid seventy-five cents an hour to throw fish on the dock (Green n.d.). The community was part of the war effort; they were producing food for the country. Times were hard, but Cortez continued to grow. Ralph Fulford remembers when his father built the fish house that still operates today:

This fish house was built in the last of '41, first of '42. We started tearing the old fish house down the day after Pearl Harbor was bombed. Well, the 8th of December is when we started and we had this one complete, ready to go the 19th of January. Just a bunch of fishermen workin'. Had a couple men here, my future Dad-in-law, Earl Guthrie and Walter Taylor was kinda foremen and they made 80 cents an hour. And Dad paid the fishermen 50 cents an hour for workin'. It was durin' the closed season on mullet so they didn't have anything else to do. So everybody was glad to get the 50 cents.<sup>19</sup>

When they returned from the war eager to begin fishing again, many veterans were surprised to find those who had remained in Cortez were on strike. It was the beginning of an on and off again association with organized labor. Those who had stayed behind or recently returned had joined the Seafarers International Union (SIU) and were striking for higher prices. A few returning veterans did not like this self-imposed closure, but soon agreed that prices needed to be raised and joined the effort. As with many other parts of the country, Cortez was in the middle of a postwar labor strike. The fishermen's association, with the SIU, did not last long. Although dealers finally gave in and raised the price of fish it was a short-term settlement. Unable to achieve a standard price statewide with dealers pitting fisherman against each other, the association with the SIU folded at the end of 1945 (Green 1985).

The relationship between a dealer and a fisherman is often a tenuous arrangement. They may often be good friends or possibly relatives. A fisherman may be asked or ask to fish for a particular dealer. In return for his fish he is provided dock space, if needed, and usually a line of credit. The fisherman is then expected to sell his fish to that particular dealer and no other for the price determined by the fish house. It is usually a

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<sup>19</sup> Oral History with Ralph Fulford, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

verbal agreement not likely sealed with even a handshake. It is a delicate balancing act of supply and demand for both product and labor.

Credit is extremely important to fishermen because the financial risks of commercial fishing are dependent upon so many unknowns, i.e., weather, seasonality of fish, environmental catastrophe (red tide), etc. Even a good fisherman has a difficult time when fish are scarce. On the other hand, the credit agreement can be a great risk for the fish house. Fishermen are known for their independence and have walked away from debts owed to fish dealers with no intention of ever repaying them. The price of fish has been the motive behind many fishermen leaving a fish house and the arrangements with a particular dealer.

The pricing of fish and seafood has been a mystery to most fishermen. The local dealer in Cortez sells to markets in Georgia, and as far away as New York and sometimes overseas. Dealers must balance the processing, storage and transportation of his product with the price offered at these distant markets for both fresh and frozen product. He may try to hedge his bets and hold out for a higher price with a frozen product. He must also ensure a steady supply or his buyers will look elsewhere. Therefore, he must have fishermen willing to sell their fish to him on a regular basis.

Fishermen have often argued that there is collusion among fish houses to hold down the price of fish (Maril 1983). There is rarely more than a few cents difference in prices paid to fishermen from one local dealer to the next. Prices have dropped in a matter of hours while fishermen were on the water. When they returned expecting one price and were told they will be paid another, tempers have flared and caused the dissolution of many a friendship between a dealer and a fisherman.

The strike was over in 1945 and with the higher prices everyone was ready to return to work. Unfortunately, an unknown environmental phenomenon was about to appear for the first time. In 1947 no one had ever seen anything like it; it was called red tide. Dead fish were floating everywhere and they had to use nets to keep them away from the fish houses (Green 1985).

Red tide is a generic term used for prolific growth of a single species of microscopic algae. They come in a variety of colors, but most often red and brown. These so-called algae blooms are often linked with eutrophication caused by excessive amounts of pollution from various sources including agricultural runoff, sewage discharge and acid rain. When suitable conditions occur these algae blooms have become quite large and have depleted the water of oxygen killing plant life and fish. Some red tide species produce neurotoxins poisoning vertebrates that ingest the algae. Invertebrates are not directly affected, but any person or fish that eats a contaminated invertebrate may develop paralytic shellfish disease.

Shortly after the red tide had disappeared another catastrophe occurred. However, this one was not environmental. In 1953 the state legislature outlawed stopnetting. Stopnetting had become the mainstay of Cortez fishing. At its height there were from six to eight stopnetting crews fishing out of Cortez, each with a crew of five or six men.<sup>20</sup> Fishermen were upset but no organized effort was undertaken to fight the decision. When the second red tide struck about the same time, many left fishing altogether to seek other employment because they saw no future in it at the time. In the same year, organized labor made one more appearance in Cortez when the United Packinghouse

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<sup>20</sup> Oral history with Vernon Mora, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez, Florida.

Workers of America decided to expand and tried to organize Florida's fishermen. It failed when they hired a former seafood dealer to head the Florida organization. The fishermen felt he could not be trusted (Green 1985).

Green (1985) referred to the fifties as a quiet time for Cortez; quiet with respect to any new challenges for the community or commercial fishing. Like the rest of the nation Cortez thrived from the post-war economic boom. Florida was growing rapidly as both a seasonal and retirement destination for millions of Americans, many of whom loved fresh seafood.

The area surrounding Cortez was the site of many new housing subdivisions, especially along the bayfront. New inlets were being carved into the shoreline allowing subdivisions to be created in what were thought to be useless wetlands that had been dredged and filled. Each home had access to the water, as it was located on a narrow strip of land surrounded by canals. Although the new migrants liked the water and fresh seafood, they did not admire those who worked the water and provided the product as well.

Local ordinances began to appear in the 1960's that outlawed fishing in a variety of settings including subdivision canals. Residents complained that fishermen were blocking canals making it difficult to enter or leave. Fishermen claimed they were just after the fish that were previously unable to hide in canals. With the support of numerous homeowner associations the fishermen were outnumbered and lacked the necessary political support; local ordinances began to appear statewide.

Before any concerted effort was taken to challenge these new ordinances Cortez fishermen adapted the only way they knew; they continued to fish the canals, but late at

night. Boat sterns were covered with carpeting so that lead lines would not make as much noise when nets were deployed. Engines were modified to quiet engine noise lessening the chances of waking residents of canal communities. Canal homeowners also adapted devising signaling techniques to inform neighbors of illicit fishing taking place in their canal. A form of class warfare had begun (Green 1985).

It became obvious that local ordinances restricting commercial fishing were going to continue emerging in every part of the state. In Everglades City commercial fishermen were fighting something entirely different. Most were small-scale fishermen who fished locally. They feared a state sponsored experiment that would allow large purse seine boats to be used for harvesting food fish. A fisherman's wife and a fish dealer's daughter, Jimmie Robinson, contacted a lawyer about possible action against the large boats. In a car rented for her through money donated by local fishermen, she traveled the state collecting money to challenge the use of the large purse seines to harvest food fish. She raised the \$3500.00 needed to hire a lawyer who successfully challenged the use of purse seines in court.

In the process of raising the money for the lawyer, "Miss Jimmie" as she became known, set the stage for the larger association, the Organized Fishermen of Florida. Fishermen from Naples, Pine Island, Cortez, Sebastian, and many others had urged her to continue the organizing effort and form a statewide organization. They wanted an association that would help fight the increasingly restrictive fishing regulations around the state. In February of 1967 a meeting was held in Everglades City and the Organized Fishermen of Florida (OFF) was inaugurated. Miss Jimmie was elected to be the first Executive Director and immediately went to Tallahassee lobbying for the industry the

next few years. That same year the Cortez chapter of OFF was formed with Thomas "Blue" Fulford as president.

The OFF differed from previous organizations like the SIU and the UPWA in that it consisted of both dealers and fishermen. In addition, its mission had nothing to do with the price of fish; it was to fight industry wide problems like local ordinances. The first assignment was to persuade the state legislature to make fishery regulations the responsibility of the state thereby voiding local ordinances. They were successful, but, a clause that allowed "special acts" provided for the continuation of many local ordinances.

Still pursuing some type of statewide fisheries management, the OFF continued lobbying for a statewide regulatory body. In 1980 the Saltwater Fisheries Study and Advisory Council was formed consisting of members from the ranks of the scientific community, commercial fishermen, seafood industry, recreational fishermen, and government. By 1982 the council had completed a report and recommended the formation of the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC). In 1983 the seven-member commission was formed with rule-making authority over marine life, excluding endangered species. However, all rules were to go before the governor and cabinet prior to becoming law.<sup>21</sup>

The OFF became an important community organization in Cortez. Fundraising by the chapter was often directed toward helping the community. It has become one of the largest chapters in the state. Cortez fishermen played major roles in the statewide

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<sup>21</sup>This stipulation became an important one for commercial fishermen in later years as the commission changed with no representation supposedly for commercial fishermen or recreational fishermen. Being political appointees, however, commissioners often favored one group or the other with the majority giving recreational fishermen an advantage in the debate over redfish and other rulings according to many commercial fishermen.



organization soon after its inception. One was elected President then Executive Director of the Organized Fishermen of Florida in 1972. He served five years before it was turned over to the person who was director during my stay in the village. Another Cortez resident served as President and Executive Vice-President for several years. He spent most of his time traveling the state meeting with other chapters or in Tallahassee lobbying. Many others from Cortez have served in elected offices and on various committees.

While there was concern for the rising opposition to commercial fishing other changes were taking place that seemed for the better. Three technological changes were about to revolutionize fishing in Cortez forever. The introduction of monofilament fishing line, fiberglass and outboard motors signaled a new beginning for the independent small-scale net fishermen. Prior to the introduction of these three technological innovations, fishing in Cortez was often an arduous task, not something to be done in an afternoon. Walter Bell, owner of A.P. Bell Fish Co., reflects on the differences he noticed in the fishing industry with the introduction of monofilament fishing line and fiberglass for boats:

Together they really made a big change. Made fishermen out of farmers you might say, or out of people who didn't know a thing about it. And the fiberglass boats, that was a big change too. Because years ago we would turn our boats over and scrub 'em off once every week. Every Saturday afternoon that was our job, to keep 'em light. And probably once every two or three months we would copper paint 'em to keep the growth off. But it was spreadin' those nets every day and turnin' the boats over once a week and cleanin' 'em off. That was a big part of your work, and buildin' spreads too. As a rule we'd take a month off just about every summer to rebuild our spreads. As a rule we'd cut Australian Pines that were growin' around on the islands and keys and bring 'em in and cut 'em down and they were just right to dry the nets.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Oral History with Walter Bell, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.



When nylon was introduced in the early 1960's it meant that nets no longer had to be limed or spread to dry. The drudgery at the end of a long fishing day was suddenly gone. With monofilament handling nets became much easier for it weighed half as much as cotton nets. Monofilament line was revolutionary not only because it was so light, but also fish could not see it as well as the old cotton, linen or even nylon. Junie Mora describes the difference in the ability to catch fish using monofilament and the old cotton or nylon nets:

It's one of the best-catchin' nets there is. But we used to have nylon and we had flax and we had cotton. And with those nets we would get out there just like I was tellin' ya. There'd be 3 or 4 skiffs, but we'd take in a bunch of mullet. They wouldn't hit them nets too good, but we'd get overboard and pull them nets around a little bit and the fish would hit. And we'd catch 'em and come home. But now all they do is take 600, 700, 800 yards of monofilament net and they go strike 'em and get it right up and go again.<sup>23</sup>

Practically all gill net being used in Cortez were made of monofilament line at the time of my study. Seines and some trammel nets were still made of nylon, but for gill nets monofilament is the line of choice. It is durable, lightweight and fish cannot detect it in the water as well as other net materials. Many old-timers commented that they detested the day it was ever invented for it was too efficient and effective. It changed the fishery radically by making individuals more independent and less reliant on other fishermen. But none have returned to fishing with nylon or cotton nets.

Boat manufacturing was also radically changed with the introduction of fiberglass. Most boats prior to the introduction of fiberglass were of wood plank construction; many were built in Cortez by boat builders like Neriah Taylor of Taylor's Boatworks or Earl

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<sup>23</sup> Oral History with Junie Mora, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

Guthrie at Ball's Boatways. Cortez native Raymond Guthrie recalls those early boat builders:

But the first boats they built, like I say, were natural crooks and they were about two foot apart all the way down the length of the boat. About 18 foot. Built those things for 40 dollars and finally went to 50 dollars. But that was some workmanship. Those old timers would put a board up there and it looked like it had growed there. They had a caulkin' iron, but they would have to force it into that crack to caulk it.<sup>24</sup>

Because no power tools were used in manufacturing these early boats resourcefulness was essential. Natural crooks were curved limbs sawed from cedar trees that conformed to the natural lines of the boat. Using naturally occurring curves, these side supports were stronger than those that had to be formed by steaming and bending them. Planks were placed with a small space between them to allow for expansion when they were placed in the water. As they expanded they formed a watertight seal. Some of the early plank boats built in the 1930's still exist in the village. An early donkey boat built by Neriah Taylor is on display at the Taylor Boatworks.

Fiberglass changed several aspects of boat building and maintenance. Because it was lighter, plywood could now be used in the construction with fiberglass laid over it for strength and waterproofing. Boats were much lighter and maintenance was greatly reduced. Boats no longer had to be removed from the water and scrubbed every week and holes were quickly patched with more fiberglass. When combined with outboard motors the transformation was complete.

Outboard motors were introduced in the 1950's, but never had much of an impact on the commercial fishery until the early 1970's when "kicker boats" were introduced. In

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<sup>24</sup> Oral History with Raymond Guthrie, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

the West central part of the state they are called "bird dog boats" and in the panhandle they are referred to as "tunnel boats". The design placed an outboard motor near the bow of the boat, inside a well cut through the flooring, rather than on the stern. It allowed them to steer from the bow, which offered a better view of the water and fish.

Tower platforms, which were raised off the deck by three or four feet, were later used to improve the ability to sight bunches of fish. Another benefit of placing the motor forward was that it removed the motor and prop from path of the net as it runs off the stern of the boat when encircling a group of fish in what is referred to as a "compass." Kicker boats had a shallower draft than other boats. By trimming the motor these boats were able to travel in water less than a foot deep. At the same time steering was made more difficult and at high speeds and with the wrong weight distribution it becomes dangerous as the vessel can easily flip over.

With the introduction of kicker boats, fishing with gillnets became a one and two man operation. No longer was there any need for large crews. With a monofilament net and a fast kicker boat one could travel from one end of the bay to the other in an afternoon or night. The old timers had dire predictions for the industry once these new innovations appeared, as Junie Mora recalls:

Yeah, and you know what was amazin' to me was that they stayed here like that. I mean, it's a wonder that the older men at that time let 'em stay. They'd tell ya right then, when they seen the kicker boat comin', that's gonna be the end of your fishin'. I remember Tink Fulford said it. There's a guy from Fort Myers, that's where they originated from, a lot of 'em. And one of 'em was up here one day and he said, "I'm gonna tell you this is one of the few spots there's no kicker boats." He said, "Don't let 'em come in here because if they do, they're gonna run you out of business. They really make it bad." Finally, a guy come in here with one and nobody said nothin' about it and then there's another one and another one, and now everybody

around here has got 'em. But everybody that's got 'em will tell ya, it's the worst thing on fish that's ever been.<sup>25</sup>

The technological transformation to monofilament gill nets and fiberglass boats with outboard motors had both its advantages and its disadvantages. Fishermen clearly recognized the advantage that these new technologies brought to their fishing operations. They could catch more fish, faster and do it with fewer people. However, there were also immediate concerns about what impact this new technology would have on fish stocks.

But the two really co-existed very well. When I started fishin' there were still a lot of gill-netters around. I did a lot of gill-nettin' myself after I quit fishin' with Uncle Tink. But I never saw where one got in the other's way. The way they gill-netted in those days, why you could fish all day long before a man was gonna run his stop-nets that night. And it wouldn't make any difference. The man would still catch fish. The way they do it now it would be a problem indeed because they've got these kicker boats that they buzz all over the flats with and what they don't catch in nets they chop the heads off or scare 'em to death or run 'em in a hole so they don't come out for a couple of weeks.<sup>26</sup>

Another important event would soon change the way some lived their lives. The more powerful motors and faster boats provided an advantage to some Cortez fishermen who were seeking a relatively new species of fish, one that was worth a great deal more than the lowly mullet, commonly called "square grouper" or marijuana.

The 1970's were trying times for the village. Florida's coastline was becoming a frequent destination for drug smugglers from the Caribbean, South and Central America. Cortez fishermen, like others from the Gulf Coast were being recruited into a highly profitable but risky business. They had the perfect cover and important knowledge. They worked at night, they knew the local waters and they could travel in extremely

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<sup>25</sup> Oral History with Junie Mora, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>26</sup> Oral history with Blue Fulford, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

shallow water. They were very familiar with law enforcement authorities and their routines, i.e., Coast Guard, Marine Patrol, Sheriff's patrol, etc.

Several Cortez villagers became heavily involved in drug trafficking and were caught. The largest drug bust in Florida at one time involved a Cortez fisherman; others were involved but were never indicted. As more and more Cortez fishermen became involved in the drug trade, some community members became concerned and decided to take a stand.

Sue Maddox had seen too many people hurt by the increasing drug trade in her village. She decided when a local fisherman was killed in an accident clearly a result of his taking drugs to take some action:

Because nobody else was. I think the final straw was when we counted seven drug-related deaths in this two-block by six-block area in just two or three years. And the last one was Harold Garntow and he was about 26-27. He fished out of Bell's and he was killed in a boating accident that would not have happened if he hadn't been using drugs. I thought about buying flowers but then I thought no, I'll just hire a billboard. So I hired a port-a-sign with the message that "Smugglers are killing our kids. I care, do you?" I think was the exact wording.

I told the sign owner that there might be some damage to his sign but I would pay. I expected some kids to throw a rock or two at it. He brought the sign in about noontime and at ten that night I was back in the kitchen watching TV and I heard a popping sound. I thought well, the kids are throwing rocks at the sign. So I went to the front of the house just in time to see flames leap about 30 feet in the air. They had dragged it out into the street and doused it with gasoline. I saw all these little legs running south from the flaming sign.<sup>27</sup>

She continued her protest around the village with handheld signs. One particular protest focused on a new restaurant that was opening at the west end of the village. She was convinced that the individual who undertook the new venture had built the business

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<sup>27</sup> Oral History with Sue Maddox, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

with drug money. Her first protest was a lonely vigil, as she stood alone at the entrance to the restaurant. The next one tripled in size when her sister and Mary Green joined her. Although the protests seemed of little consequence they did generate publicity with the local news media publishing several stories about Cortez and the drug traffic.

Later, indictments were handed down for several Cortez residents who served time in prison for their illegal activities. Although her protests seemed ineffectual at the time, Sue believes that the publicity generated helped to stimulate more interest by the authorities, which eventually brought a halt to most of the drug traffic in Cortez.

### **Encroachment on the Village**

In 1978 plans for a high-rise condominium on the north side of highway 684 in Cortez, just beyond the marina were made public. Wyman Coarsey, postmaster from Cortez, spearheaded the opposition to the development, which was very near his home. The county approved the development despite inadequate fire protection and traffic hazards that were brought up. County commissioners said later that promoters of the project deceived them. Fortunately, the developer ran into financial troubles and was unable to start any part of the project other than getting it approved. The county changed its zoning regulations and required special permits to build multi-family residential housing on commercial property soon after (Green 1985).

That same year Manatee County proposed village zoning for Cortez, Myakka City, Parrish and Rubonia. It was decided that these traditional communities needed special protection and village zoning would do that. Meetings were held by county officials in each community to explain the proposal. When questioned as to how this new zoning regulation would empower the local citizenry, officials could only answer that the county still had final authority with regard to zoning decisions. With that, the citizens of Cortez

decided they would be no better off with village zoning. County officials were perplexed. It seemed to them that Cortez did not want protection. On the other hand residents of Cortez did not trust the county and felt that another option could give them power to determine their own fate. Eventually a Cortez Area Plan was created in 1983 which limited development for the entire Cortez Peninsula to ten units per acre and no higher than three stories over parking (Green 1985).

The year before the Cortez Area Plan was created another condominium project was being planned, this time behind the Cortez School. Wyman Coarsey led the fight again for two years and again the proposed development was dropped. Eventually all plans were cancelled because of financial problems. Either luck or persistence was on the side of Cortez residents.

The Cortez Village Historical Society (CVHS) was formed in 1985. A daughter of Walton "Tink" Fulford owner of Fulford Fish Company headed the group. She had returned to the area living near Cortez, when her husband retired from the service. She became very active in village affairs and spearheaded a campaign to focus on local history and genealogy. Her son, Ben Green, wrote *Finest Kind*, a history of Cortez and commercial fishing which characterized the trials and tribulations of this fishing community for most of a century. The historical society received a Florida Endowment for the Humanities grant and conducted a small survey for the purpose of creating a local genealogical publication. Today, the historical society provides tours of the community during Heritage Week, publishes a newsletter and holds boat rides for fundraising every winter. The daughter of the fish house owner has continued to be an officer in the



historical society and recently ran for County Commissioner. She was not elected to the commission but continued her efforts to bring recognition to her home village.

In 1986 Chris Craft introduced plans to build a recreational boat showroom and marina in Cortez. Land had been purchased from Cortez native Natalie Mora on the west end of the village just beyond the Albion Inn (now the U.S. Coast Guard Station). The plans for the development were made public at a County Commission meeting. Three or four residents from Cortez at that meeting spoke out against those plans. They initially challenged the development on the basis that the docking facilities would extend into the channel and inhibit the flow of boat traffic. Many felt that the pleasure boat manufacturer was too powerful and any attempt to halt the development was futile. They were wrong. Shortly after that meeting the director of the Village Historical Society began a campaign to stop Chris Craft. With increasing pressure from the community of Cortez, the County Commission withheld certain key permits, which were crucial to the completion of the project. Plans for the showroom and marina were dropped. Chris Craft returned the land to Natalie Mora who still owns the land minus her home, which was razed shortly after Chris Craft made the purchase.

### **Contemporary Cortez**

Today, for the most part the historic village of Cortez (Figure 4-1) is situated to the south of state road 684 (Cortez Road). Except for along the waterfront, land to the north of the highway has historically been agricultural. Much of it remains so today, as do many parcels to the east of the village. This land has played an important role for the village in that it has served as a buffer to the urban sprawl from the city of Bradenton and isolating Cortez to a certain extent.



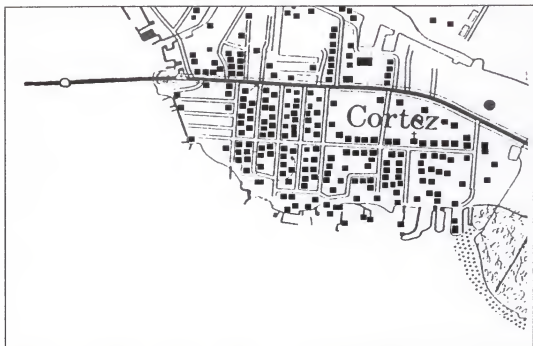


Figure 4-1. Historic Village of Cortez South of Cortez Road.

Retail businesses along Cortez Road include: two restaurants, an ice cream parlor, two recreational boat dealers, a grocery, a surf shop, two mobile home parks, a veterinarian, a canvas maker, a rental business, a laundromat, a beauty parlor and Post Office. At the southeast end of the village at the foot of the bridge to the barrier islands is a charter boat operation. Across the highway and to the north are a bait shop, restaurant and boatslips. Condominium and marina developments are situated to the north of the restaurant on the waterfront. Although there are many residences on the north side of Cortez Road, it is often not considered part of the historic village. Indeed, the recent National Register district nomination does not extend to the north of Cortez Road. Some longtime residents on the north side have taken offense in that they are not considered part of the village.

There are few residences typical of the village located on the highway so the visual character of the village is not readily apparent from the road. The village consists of

approximately 200 dwellings and is classified multiple use, however most are single-family dwellings generally described as "cracker style" architecture.

In 1991 the waterfront in Cortez had four working fish houses. One of those was essentially a retail outlet while the others are primarily wholesale operations. The largest, A.P. Bell had 30 full-time employees and approximately 100 fishermen connected to the operation with over half of those prosecuting the inshore fisheries. Fulford Fish Co.<sup>28</sup> had 1-3 part-time employees and 12 fishermen, all of which fish inshore, while Sigma International employed 3 full-time with 25 fishermen. During the fall run season each fish house will double the number of employees in order to handle the large catches of roe mullet. The remaining waterfront property is occupied by the charter boat operation, one of the trailer courts, the U.S. Coast Guard station, private residences, and a now defunct fish house and restaurant complex.

Extending West from Cortez Harbor to Tidy Island and South to the Audubon Rookery is the shallow body of water called the "Kitchen" for its ability to provide a continuous supply of scallops and other seafood to village residents during lean times like the Depression. In addition, the ruins of historic net camps remain in the harbor and have important symbolic meaning to many Cortesians.

Cortez's waterfront has become especially vulnerable to land-based development pressures given today's strict regulations placed on the harvesting of fish by the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC). Reallocation of marine resources has put

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<sup>28</sup> The Fulford Fish Co. closed its doors in 1993 when Ralph Fulford, son of Walton Fulford, retired from the business. It was quickly leased by the A.P. Bell Fish Co. and continues to be used as an unloading facility for small boats. This fish house represents the last vestige of the type of fishing that has been the mainstay for Cortez fishermen: small scale net fishing. Both the A.P. Bell Fish Co. and Sigma International convey a certain industrial character that seems out of place in such a small community.

commercial fishermen at a disadvantage and now challenges their survival on the water (Smith and Jepson 1993). Not only do commercial fishermen themselves feel threatened due to economic pressures, but fish houses also face a bleak future with a reduction in supply and shrinking markets as they are unable to provide a consistent supply of fish. While Cortez has resisted development forces in the past, today it is the combination of waterfront re-development and denial of access to resources that threatens not only the livelihood, but also the very identity of some Cortesians.

Two recent events have played a key role in generating concern for the village's future. The first was the destruction of the Albion Inn by the U. S. Coast Guard. This late nineteenth century hotel had been the Regional headquarters for the Coast Guard since the 1970s. In its early years the hotel had an illustrious career, drawing tourists from all walks of life. Some of the more famous included John and Mabel Ringling, of circus fame, who would often sail their yacht to Cortez for Sunday dinner at the Inn. Although local activists argued for the historical significance of the hotel, the Coast Guard razed the building in 1991.

Through the efforts of the Cortez Village Historical Society and other concerned residents part of this historic structure, Burton's Store, was saved. Prior to removal, Burton's Store/Post Office was one of the oldest structures still standing on Sarasota Bay. Now in storage near the A.P. Bell Fish Co., the building is being stabilized until a suitable site in the village can be located for a proposed museum.

The second threat came from a planned 65 ft. high fixed span bridge on Cortez Road to replace the existing drawbridge to the islands. Proponents for the bridge claimed it was necessary to replace the drawbridge in order to alleviate congested traffic during

the peak tourist seasons, especially in the case of an emergency evacuation. Opponents maintained that the proposed bridge would extend well into Cortez Village preventing easy access to other parts of the village. In addition, they asserted that the majority of traffic was destined for Longboat Key and an alternative location for the larger bridge should be considered. The opposing forces succeeded in delaying any decision regarding the bridge with its removal from the county's five-year plan. However, many felt that continued pressure from pro-development forces outside of Cortez would renew the bridge issue after the upcoming election.

Earlier episodes involving the sale and redevelopment of waterfront property have threatened the character of the village. The plan for the aforementioned recreational boat showroom on vacant waterfront property was one. Another related event concerned the expansion of one fish house that was defeated due to the perceived impacts of increased truck traffic. The expansion was moved to another location taking with it increased employment opportunities. The significance of this last example is the division among several factions that still exists within the village over jobs lost.

The threat that had the most potential to impact the community was the petition circulated to ban net fishing in Florida during the 1994 ballot. A coalition of several recreational fishing groups called their campaign the Save Our Sealife (SOS). The Florida Conservation Association (FCA), a recreational fishing lobby group, was the major proponent in the drive to ban nets. Articles, which focused on particular cases of questionable or illegal commercial fishing activity, appeared monthly in the publication the *Florida Sportsman*. It was claimed that commercial fishermen were under-regulated, were depleting stocks and were responsible for the killing of protected and endangered

species like dolphin and sea turtles. In addition, the increased revenue that would come from an entire recreational inshore fishery justified the ban on commercial nets.

Commercial fishermen claimed that the environmental issues identified by the SOS were being addressed through regulation and better enforcement. They also pointed out that although recreational fishermen catch fish one by one, they have had a greater impact on fish stocks than the commercial fishery. And they cautioned that as food providers, fresh seafood would be a scarce commodity if the ban were successful.

The initiative generated enough signatures in July 1993 to be placed on the ballot for the November election. Compensation for commercial fishermen if the ban passed was discussed in Tallahassee, the state capital, during the spring of 1994 but did not make the agenda for legislative debate.

Attempts to organize resistance to the aforementioned threats to the community and the bid by sport fishing interests to ban inshore netting produced a coalition consisting of the local historical society (CVHS), the local chapter of the commercial fishermen's organization (OFF) and other village activists. A non-profit organization, the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage (FISH) was formed in 1991 to study the feasibility of establishing a Maritime Cultural Center in Cortez. This association was a direct result of the fight to save the Albion Inn. The original charter established seats on the board of directors for representatives from the local Organized Fishermen of Florida, the Cortez Village Historical Society, the County Historical Commission and several residents of the village. A local artist/historian was named the director of the Maritime Cultural Center, a title that was not a part of the board of directors. However, this individual became the unofficial head of the organization and undertook most of the daily operation.

With a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation the feasibility study produced a document outlining the plans and preferred sites in the village for the Maritime center. This document was the centerpiece for the director's efforts to stabilize Cortez's waterfront and maintain its sense of community (Eshelman et al. 1992).

The coalition was not strong and the representatives for the Cortez Village Historical Society soon resigned from the board of directors due to differing opinions as to the primary focus of the organization. The seats were filled by a husband and wife whose main interests were to support the musical traditions of the village, but were part of CVHS. FISH remained active and received a Florida Humanities Council grant to document the folk traditions of the village. Support for the new organization from the local chapter of the Organized Fishermen of Florida was weak as most of the membership of that organization wanted monies spent on efforts to stop the net ban initiative. Because it might jeopardize its non-profit status, FISH was unable to participate in direct efforts to oppose the net ban. The organization was beginning to be seen as another historical society for the village. In fact, many people, including residents, were confused as to who was doing what with regard to the preservation of Cortez. It was clear that during fundraising many people thought the two organizations were one and the same and that money given to either group would help both. This was not the case as FISH and CVHS were beginning to diverge, as the two leaders grew increasingly intolerant of one another.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE CULTURE OF A NATURAL RESOURCE COMMUNITY

Fishing communities like Cortez are "natural resource communities" where work habits and social life revolve around seasonal cycles of fish, not the seasonal arrival or departure of tourists. Like other natural resource communities, everyday life is intrinsically connected to the rhythm of nature. For generations, there has been an intimate relationship between daily living and the marine environment. Changes in weather or phases of the moon that affect the tides and marine life govern fishermen's work and social activity. Other environmental phenomenon, like red tide or hurricanes, has a dramatic effect upon village economy, home life, and ultimately survival. Residents frequently have close kinship ties to one another with several generations living within the same community.

Cortez fishermen historically fished a small-boat net fishery in inland and coastal waters. With the introduction of new fishing gear and techniques much of that changed. Where fishing was once a family affair with a crew of related individuals, new lightweight nets and powerful motors have made it more of an individual endeavor. In the past, most lived in the village and would walk to the water to work on boats that were docked where they sold their fish. Their daily social life took place on the docks where they would sit on benches and tell stories or discuss the day's catch as they offloaded their fish. Rising property values and taxes as a result of the growing population that continually intrudes upon their village has forced young fishermen to live elsewhere and

drive to their former home to work. The combined changes had a dramatic impact on fishing practices and the social life of the village.

### The Fishery and Fishermen

Depending upon the fish being sought, fishermen in Cortez use various types of net: gill nets, trammel nets, seine nets and cast nets. Gill nets made of monofilament nylon, of which the “strike net” or “runaround” gill net was most common, vary in length and depth. The “mesh” size determines what size fish will be caught and depends upon what type of species is being sought. Most all configurations of a net are regulated by law, i.e., type of material, length, height, mesh size, etc.

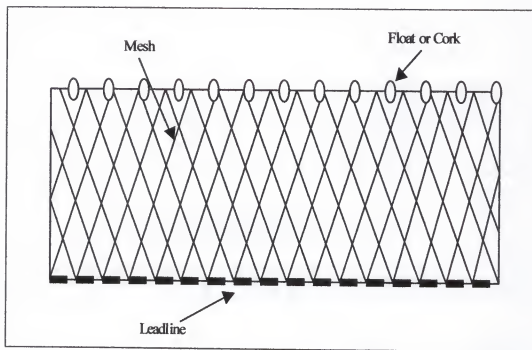


Figure 5-1. Gill Net Configuration.

The runaround gill net has floats commonly called “corks” on top which keep the net floating on top the water (Figure 5-1). Lead weights at the bottom, referred to as the “leadline,” keep the base of the net on the bottom of the bay so fish cannot swim



underneath. As fish swim through the net the larger fish become entangled and cannot back out because their gills will often prevent them from escaping. Smaller fish swim through and are not impeded.

Most fishermen use small gill net boats that have a crew of two or three including the captain. These boats are usually not over thirty feet in length but will frequently carry nets of over 1,000 yards. Called "kicker boats," the engine is placed toward the front of the vessel, just behind where the captain steers and watches for fish. The net is in the rear as seen in Figure 5.2 where it can easily drop out the back of the boat and not become entangled in the engine prop after throwing the "let go" into the water. The "let go" is a weight that is tied to one end of the net with a short rope. The captain or crew holds onto the "let go" and once a "bunch" of fish are sighted, the captain signals for the let go to be thrown into the water.

Once the "let go" has been thrown, the captain pushes the throttle to full speed as he encircles the fish several times with the net. Once the fish are encircled, he shuts off the engine and waits while the fish become entangled in the net. In some cases a crewmember or the captain might beat the side of the boat to scare the fish into the net. Once the fish are gilled, the net is "roped" back into the boat. As the net is dragged into the back of the boat, the fish are pulled from the net, placed in the "fish box", and covered with ice. In some cases, if the captain is fishing alone or there is an exceptionally large catch, the fish are left in the net and the net is cleared back at the fish house, as was the case in Figure 5-2.

This was the primary method used for fishing mullet year round. Although during the roe season another crew member might be added to handle the increased landings.

Almost every fisherman in Cortez at one time or another fished for mullet. The mullet fishery had been the primary source of income in the past and for many fishermen it remained so, especially during the roe season when prices increased dramatically to supply the Asian markets. This lucrative Asian market would become one of the focal point for the net ban campaign.



Figure 5-2. Net Fisherman and his Kicker with Mullet in Net.

For some species, like pompano and Spanish mackerel, a specialized gill net is used which is shorter than the “strike net.” Called “set nets,” these nets are outfitted with smaller floats and have anchor weights tied to each end. This allows the net to float below the water line. Fish that migrate up and down the shoreline are entangled, as they are unable to see the monofilament netting. This type of net is often set perpendicular to the shoreline and is fished passively, which means that the net is set and the fisherman does nothing more than wait for an hour or two and sometimes longer before picking it up. This period of time between setting the net and picking it up is what has made this

type of gear a target of many environmental groups and others. It is during this time that many species, often non-targeted species, can drown in the net. This is especially true for high-seas drift gill nets that are left for much longer periods of time before picking them up. Although none of the Cortez fishermen used this type of net, an association was made during the Save Our Sealife (SOS) campaign to implicate Florida fishermen in the deaths of endangered or protected species. This type of net was most often used in Federal waters and would not be affected by the net ban campaign, yet was a good source of propaganda for the recreational fishing interest groups. Furthermore, the FMFC began to introduce tending laws that required fishermen to stay with their nets and placed time limits on "soaking" or how long the net was in the water. These laws made it more unlikely that Florida's inshore fishermen would kill endangered or protected species.

Trammel nets are different from gill nets in that there are two outer walls of larger mesh built into the net. These nets allow for a larger range in size of fish to be caught as the smaller mesh entangles some fish while the larger mesh allows big fish to push the smaller mesh through the larger mesh forming a pocket in which it becomes enclosed. While it is very time consuming extracting fish from a gill net, a trammel net is even more so since there is more webbing with which to become entangled. Trammel nets were not commonly used during my stay in Cortez and if they were used it was by older fishermen.

One fisherman remembers using trammel nets in earlier days:

Well, we used trammel net in those days. Old cotton trammel net. They had 6/20, 9/20 and 12/20 twines. The higher the number, the bigger the twine. Most of the time we used 6/20, make the trammel net with inside walls would be 4 1/4 inches I think is what it was and the trammel walls themselves, the outside nets, were about 10 inches. And you'd just find the fish and run that net around 'em. It would catch all sizes. He had some old heavy 12/20 like that that we'd use to catch everything if

we was join' where there was a lot of big blue fish. We called 'em bank loafer pompano. Four or five pounders. They'd just take up on a place and hang there with it till somebody caught 'em or run 'em off.<sup>30</sup>

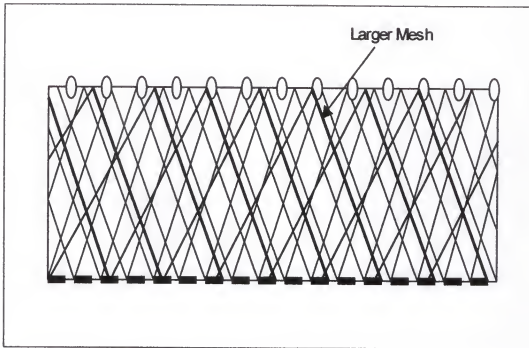


Figure 5-3. Trammel Net Configuration.

There were a few large net boats in Cortez that ranged in size from 45 to 60 feet in length. These vessels carried longer nets and were often used in the mackerel fisheries nearshore and offshore, but would occasionally be used for mullet during roe season. They traveled farther and could follow migratory fish from the Keys to the Panhandle. A fisherman once commented that these larger vessels were financed through the drug trade during the 1970's and were largely responsible for the decline in mackerel during that same decade.

The aforementioned nets are all entanglement nets and were the primary focus of the SOS campaign. Although the amendment would affect other fisheries, like bait

<sup>30</sup> Oral history with Blue Fulford, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

shrimp, entanglement nets were the center of attention. But, fishermen from Cortez had expanded their repertoire of fishing practices over the years to include larger vessels and a variety of gear types to fish for shrimp, both food and bait and offshore species like reef fish.

Seine nets have a much smaller mesh size since the fish do not become entangled in the net, but held within the circle of net. These nets are manufactured of heavier gauge braided nylon. Haul seines were used more commonly in Cortez in earlier days. It was fished with larger crews and several boats, including boats to haul the net that were often towed behind the larger launch. The net is set with one end near the shoreline as the net is run out into the surf or bay encircling the fish taking the other end of the net back to the shore. The net is pulled from both ends back onto the shore. Some haul seines have bags sewn into the middle of the net into which the fish swim, as the net is pulled closer to the shore. Haul seines are labor intensive taking several crew to pull the net. Some fishermen on Florida's East coast use hydraulic winches mounted on the front of pickup trucks to haul their nets in when fishing on the beach even today. But, for the most part, this labor-intensive fishing method was abandoned for the lighter and easier to handle gill nets.

Purse seines are used primarily in the baitfish fishery. These seines are constructed of the same material as other seines, but unlike others the purse seine has a rope laced through the bottom line along with lead weights. When both ends are pulled the net purses, closing it like a large pouch. The net itself is hauled into the boat with hydraulic pulleys making the pouch smaller and smaller, concentrating the fish so they can then be dipped out of the purse seine and into the hold on the boat. Thread herring and Spanish

sardines were the mainstay of the bait fishery for Cortez fishermen. Once offloaded, the baitfish were boxed and sold to bait and tackle shops for use in the recreational fishery.

Although this fishery provided a good source of bait for recreational fishermen, it became the target of recreational fishing interests groups as they lobbied the FMFC to push the fishery outside of state waters. It was their claim that baitfish had declined enough to affect other species for which they were an important food source. The FMFC did eventually place restrictions on the bait seine fishery allowing it to operate outside of a line three miles from shore. This became particularly onerous as baitfish would sometimes remain inside the three mile line depending upon environmental conditions forcing fishermen to either wait for fish to come out or cross inside the line and fish illegally. It would become a constant source of tension between enforcement officials and fishermen as baitfish moved in and outside of the line.

As mentioned earlier, other types of fishing vessels in Cortez included bait shrimpers, offshore shrimpers and reef fish vessels. Bait shrimpers fished inshore waters, primarily in the bays catching small shrimp to be sold live to bait and tackle shops. There were two vessels in Cortez and both were between 20- 30 feet in length with nets less than twenty feet in width. Shrimp nets are typically pulled from outriggers that extend from the side of the vessel and are dragged along the bottom scooping up shrimp and whatever else is in their path. After towing the nets for a short time, they are emptied onto a sorting table where the shrimp are separated from everything else and placed in aerated tanks. Again placed in aerated tanks on the docks after offloading, they are later transported to their destination in trucks with similar aeration equipment. Bait shrimpers make nightly trips for a few hours and often fish alone or with one other crewmember.

Although bait shrimping was not a primary target of the net ban campaign, fishermen, both recreational and commercial, have been suspect of the effect this type of fishing may have on the bottom. Many have questioned the impact on seagrasses and other important nursery habitat as nets are dragged along the bottom.

There were two vessels in Cortez which fished for shrimp offshore. These shrimp vessels were from 50 to 80 ft. in length. Offshore shrimp vessels usually have a hull made of steel, wood or fiberglass and will pull either two or four otter trawl depending upon the size of the vessel and its towing capacity. They fish well offshore and are often away from port for several days, sometimes up to a month. The catch can range from a few hundred pounds to several thousand if they are lucky.

Offshore shrimping would not be affected by the proposed SOS amendment. However, an important association was going to be made with this type of fishing during the net ban campaign. Like bait shrimping, offshore shrimping is indiscriminate in its catch and at times has a very high "bycatch." Bycatch is everything else that is caught in the net other than shrimp. This "bycatch" became the primary focus for two important gear modifications required on all offshore shrimp gear: turtle excluder devices and bycatch reduction devices. All shrimp vessels in the Gulf of Mexico and South Atlantic, whether in state or federal waters are required to have these two devices in their nets. Bait shrimpers are excluded from these rules because their tow times are of short duration and are not likely to drown other species. Even with these devices, bycatch in the offshore shrimp fishery can be very high with a ratio of bycatch to shrimp as high as ten to one. It was this figure that was to be used during the net ban campaign implying that the net ban would stop such a practice, when in fact; it would have no impact whatsoever.



While Cortez fishermen historically participated in a small boat gillnet fishery, in the 1980s there was a move by one fish house to pursue other species offshore, primarily reef fish. By the early 1990s there were approximately 15 vessels that worked in this fishery from Cortez and that particular fish house became an important dealer in that species group.

There are two primary methods of fishing used by reef fish vessels. Most reef fish vessels in Cortez use long line gear. Long lining is a method of fishing whereby a heavy gauge nylon main fishing line that has thousands of baited hooks attached to it with lighter gauge nylon is laid out on the ocean floor. The line is wound onto a large drum from which it is pulled when being set. The line is weighted so that it sits on the bottom of the sea floor. Floats or buoys are tied on either or both ends to assist in locating the line after it has been set. Some large buoys have flashing lights and large metal fins to make it easier to locate at night with radar. The main line can be as long as 5 miles depending on the size of the vessel.

The other method of fishing for reef fish is called "bandit reels." This method of fishing consists of electric or hydraulic fishing reels with enough line and heavy weights to drop several hundred feet to the reef structure below. Each line has several hooks attached that are baited prior to dropping down the line. The line is left for a period of time that can be several minutes to a half an hour before reeling up the line. Fish are taken off the hooks and placed in holds with ice after being gutted.

Reef fish vessels spend up to a week on the water. The conditions on board are very austere as crew quarters are minimal when compared to large offshore shrimp vessels which are often more accommodating. The majority, if not all, of the vessels in



Cortez were owned by the fish house and run by hired crew. Most native Cortez fishermen did not participate in either fishery to any great extent. In fact, most of the crew aboard these vessels were itinerant fishermen who often suffered from either drug or alcohol abuse. Their home was usually the vessel they were crewing on at the time. The appearance of the sheriff's department at the docks was a frequent source of displeasure among native Cortesians.

Fishermen have historically feuded over gear types and Cortez fishermen were no exception as discussed earlier. It was not readily apparent but there were divisions among those who worked the offshore fisheries and the inshore. Most captains and crew in the offshore fisheries were younger and often not native to the village. There was no open hostility, but inshore fishermen would often express their disdain for offshore fishing. This may have been due to the longer trip lengths as inshore fishermen were home every night or day. They wanted to be home to spend time with their families. The offshore crew did not have family and would spend their time on shore at bars or drinking alcohol they carried with them around the village. The image of fishermen carrying beer to the dock was not appreciated by many Cortesians.

The division between those who fished offshore and those who fished inshore was more complicated than merely the distance from shore that one fished. It represented divergent views of community and values associated with what the community should be. Those who fished offshore and with larger vessels were embracing the wave of the future. They saw growth in the industry as a good thing and they tended to not support compromises with fishery managers. They seemed to show less attachment to the community. This division included fishermen who lived in the village and/or had close

kinship ties to many others living there and may or may not fish offshore. It also included division along religious lines. As mentioned earlier, the two primary churches in the village were fundamental Christian churches and the descendants of many of those who had migrated from North Carolina were members. There were other families in the village that had kinship ties to the Spanish and were Catholic. These differences were rarely mentioned but the division was clear when certain issues, like fisheries management or expanding the scope or size of fish houses, became a matter of debate within the community.

#### **At the Fish House**

Mullet are an oily fish, which contributes to a relatively short shelf life. The oils in the flesh breakdown quickly which make freezing mullet impractical for long-term storage. Therefore, they are quickly transported to markets in the round (head and tail on). Smoked mullet is a local specialty and can be found in most seafood retail outlets. It is rarely offered on restaurant menus, but "mullet wagons" are often parked in the village or around the area selling this regional fare. Mullet has a dark flesh and the taste is somewhat more "fishy," in contrast to more popular fish like grouper or even mackerels. Nevertheless, although the reputation of this fish made it less appealing to some, it was largely responsible for the development of the Cortez commercial waterfront.

In 1991 there were three working fish houses and one retail fish market on the Cortez waterfront: A.P. Bell Fish Co.; Fulford Fish Co.; Sigma, International; and Star Fish (Figure 5-4). A.P. Bell Fish Co. employed approximately 30 full time employees and had approximately 100 fishermen associated with their operation. Fulford Fish Co. had a much smaller workforce with only 3 part-time employees not including the owner

with 12 fishermen. Sigma International had 3 fulltime employees and approximately 25 fishermen connected with that operation. The Bayshore fish house at the western end of the village was unoccupied and had been vacant for several years.

A.P. Bell Fish Company was the largest operation with both offshore and inshore vessels which included offshore shrimp trawlers; reef fish vessels, commonly called grouper boats (both longline and bandit reel); purse seine vessels; and the smaller gill net kicker boats. Sigma was the next largest operation with several purse seine vessels pursuing baitfish and some larger gill net boats. They also unloaded many smaller gill net boats during the roe season. The Fulford fish house was a traditional operation and off loaded only small gill net vessels. The offloading dock was low, close to the shore and would not accommodate the larger vessels. It had no freezers so fish were iced in coolers prior to being shipped off to markets in larger urban areas and Georgia. Sigma International was owned by Asian interests and was primarily involved in the roe fishery, but also offloaded several purse seine boats for bait fish. Their main office was in St. Petersburg.

The small gill net boats hold a few hundred pounds of mullet. They carry some ice and fish are often left on the floor covered with ice and a tarp or placed in a large cooler with ice. In the event of an exceptionally large catch or if the weather forces an early return, the net may be cleared at the dock as mentioned earlier (see earlier Figure 5-2). One or two trips are made daily and depending upon the species being fished, regulations, and the season. For some species, like mackerel, fishermen may fish at night looking for a phosphorescence glow in the water as the fish swim by, referred to as the flash.

Once at the dock fish are offloaded and weighed. Fishermen may assist with this process or let dock personnel weigh the fish and pack them in the freezer. This depends on how much the fisherman trusts those working at the fish house. In some cases, after a long night of fishing, a fisherman may dock his boat and ask to have it unloaded while he goes home to catch up on his sleep. He may come down later to the fish house and “settle up” which means he can either get cash for his catch or put the day’s catch toward any expenses he has with the fish house. Most fishermen, however, settle up at the end of the week.

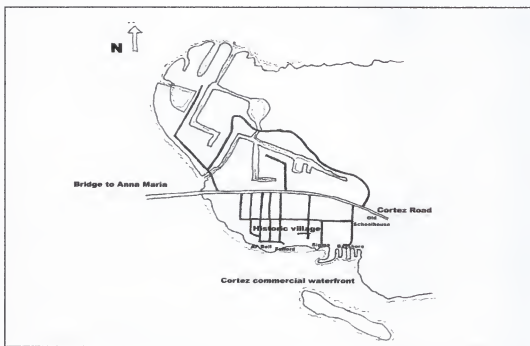


Figure 5-4. Cortez Village with Location of Fish Houses.

Once the fish have been offloaded at the dock they are kept in freezers or insulated cooler rooms in boxes with ice. They are kept there for a short while and are later removed, gutted, and cleaned, if needed, prior to shipping to other wholesale or retail buyers. During roe season fish are quickly gutted and the roe is packed and shipped. The carcass is also packed and shipped to fresh markets, or is sold for bait.

As mentioned earlier most of the fish houses have a small full time work force, but employ more workers on a part time basis. That work is determined most often by the seasonal abundance of fish. Both young and old (See Figure 5-5) and often minorities supply part time labor. The roe season is when most locals are employed part time, as fish are gutted quickly after offloading and the roe is packed and shipped to other facilities.

This seasonal and varied workforce is an important part of many natural resource communities. It requires a very flexible and sometimes sizable workforce that is not permanently employed. Therefore, Cortez may have a sizable number of individuals who at any one time have little or nothing to do, whether they are retired, in school, a fisherman or destitute.

The relationship between fishermen and the fish house is a tenuous one. Fishermen sell to a fish house and in return often receive dock space and/or credit from the owner. Fishermen often rely on the fish house for credit to buy needed supplies or to pay for repairs and other expenses they may incur. In fact, they may ask for a cash advance if they are short of cash. Loyalty to the fish house is an often controversial issue. The owner expects the fisherman to sell only to him in exchange for a credit line that can run into the thousands of dollars. However, I often heard from both fishermen and fish house owners that it was not uncommon for a fisherman to leave one fish house and begin selling to another, without paying off his debt. These disputes would often arise over price paid for fish or the fish house cutting fishermen off, claiming they cannot buy fish because the markets are glutted.

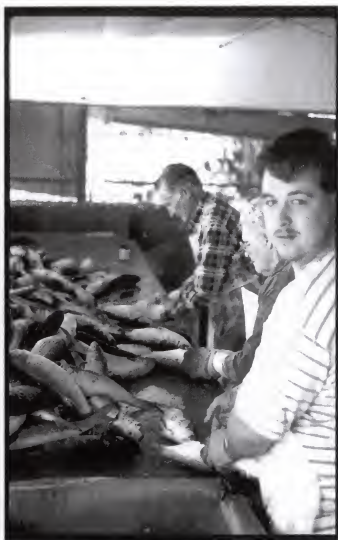


Figure 5-5. Part Time Labor Used During Roe Mullet Season

Prices paid for fish have been a controversial topic between fishermen and the fish house in Cortez and elsewhere (Acheson 1981; Maril 1983). In fact it has been the impetus for attempts to unionize fishermen in Cortez:

Well, there were several attempts to unionize the fishermen. They all fell through and I was a part of it. They'd form a union and try to go on strike. That was always for price control. Tried to get more out of our fish. We thought the dealers were not payin' as much as they could. We were tryin' to get a higher price for our product. That never did work out. We'd strike for six weeks sometimes and then the dealer would entice someone to go fishin' and as soon as one boat untied from the dock, everybody was gone. They didn't care about the strike or nothin' else. They just wasn't gonna let somebody catch fish when they weren't out there tryin'.

The unions never did work. But in 1966, '67 we had formed what was called the Organized Fishermen of Florida. That's a trade association that was interested mostly, not mostly but entirely, in keepin' the bays open for fishermen to fish in. Fightin' legislation, promoting seafood products and workin' on something besides price control. I think in 1970 I became President and Executive Director of that and held onto that job for nearly 10 years.<sup>31</sup>

Unions and Co-ops have had varied success among fishermen cross culturally (Acheson 1981). Some have suggested that the independent nature of fishermen precludes them from organizing for they lack the cooperative spirit that is needed to unionize or form cooperatives (Poggie 1980). As mentioned above, they had little success in Cortez. While these fishermen became involved in the Organized Fishermen of Florida, there were still divisions around the state that prevented all commercial fishermen from becoming organized into one inclusive group. Divided by gear types and areas fished, no united fisherman's organization would appear to challenge the well organized opposition to their livelihood.

Each fish house in Cortez had a slightly different character as mentioned before. The Bell Fish company had most of the offshore boats and large freezers. Of the three fish houses, it was the busiest. Sigma also had some large bait boats and a few large net boats that offloaded there, but overall during the summer months it was pretty quiet. There were fishermen at the Fulford fish house most anytime except late a night. On occasion when night fishing, fishermen would frequent these docks late, but it was a common daily routine for older fishermen to sit at Fulford's and watch the incoming catch and tell fishing stories.

It was an obvious difference when you visited the Fulford fish house where only inshore fishermen would offload. The atmosphere was much more relaxed and many

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<sup>31</sup> Oral History with Blue Fulford, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

older retired fishermen would hang around the docks. The pace of activity was slower and more relaxed. The A.P. Bell fish house was always bustling with forklifts moving boxes of fish from freezer to freezer. A crew of fish cutters was always working gutting or filleting fish. And there was a lot more noise. It was a stark contrast, both family businesses but, each with a distinct atmosphere that seemed to reflect the transition from the historic and traditional small boat fishery to the more recent and modern large boat fishery. It was like walking from the past into the future as you moved from one to the other.

### **Daily Routines and Seasonal Times**

As Dyer et al. (1992) and others have pointed out, life in a natural resource community revolves around the seasonal variation of the resource. Cortez is no different as depicted in Figure 5-6, with many activities centered on raising funds for the village coinciding with the winter tourist season and the availability of fish. Many "snow birds" arrive for the winter as early as late October but most arrive in November. The winter tourist season was also a time when there were plenty of fish available as the fall roe mullet fishery was well underway. Spanish and king mackerel would also begin arriving in the early part of the New Year.

Mullet spend most of their life in the estuaries. During spawning, however, they bunch together and swim offshore to spawn. The beginning of the fall roe mullet season is usually slow as the fish began to develop roe and later make their run offshore. The roe is sold to Japanese buyers who exported it to Asian markets. The Sigma fish house was part of a much larger operation that was Japanese owned; the operation in Cortez was primarily for roe mullet but included also a baitfish operation. Until the mullet roe



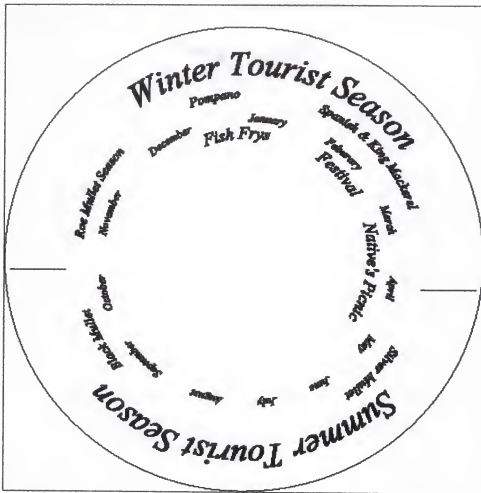


Figure 5-6. Seasonal Cycles within the Natural Resource Community of Cortez.

was of sufficient size, fishermen fish for the local and regional markets only. Once the roe became of marketable size, the main fall roe season begins. The price of mullet goes up considerably once the roe becomes of marketable size. Mullet prior to roe seasons could be as low as thirty-five cents a pound, but more often it was around fifty cents. Once the roe had matured, the price of mullet could jump to a dollar twenty or more per pound. The roe itself could be as high as five to six dollars a pound. The roe fishery is where many small net fishermen made a substantial portion of their income for the year. As regulations increased on other species, the roe season for mullet was increasingly important to the survival of these fishing families.

Fish fries were held on Friday nights at the Cortez firehouse. A ladies' auxiliary provided most of the labor setting up the kitchen and providing many of the side dishes and desserts that were offered along with the fried fish. Volunteer firemen set up tables and chairs and fried the fish, which was usually mullet, but on occasion could be substituted with Spanish mackerel depending upon availability. The volunteer fire department was the primary beneficiary of the money from the fish fries and used it to buy equipment for the firehouse. Cortez fishermen made up the volunteer force and their wives the auxiliary.

The annual seafood festival originated in 1982 and quickly became the primary fundraiser for the local OFF chapter. Held every third Saturday in February it was generally well attended with as many as 10,000 people if the weather is nice<sup>32</sup>. A committee consisting of village residents, mostly fishermen or former fishermen, their wives and relatives meet several months prior to the festival to plan and organize the event. The festival includes food vendors, arts and crafts vendors, music throughout the day and entertainment for children. All arts and crafts are required to have a maritime theme. All food vendors must sell some seafood items but do offer other fare for those who desired something other than seafood. Although some village residents do sell food or arts and crafts, the majority of vendors are from outside the village. Local restaurants provide the majority of the food vending, while arts and crafts vendors come from a more regional geographic area.

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<sup>32</sup> During my stay in the village several attempts were made to have the Seafood festival on two days instead of one, but local churches objected to having the celebration on Sunday. Later the Festival committee prevailed and the festival is now held on both days, but begins at noon on Sunday.



Figure 5-7. Banner at Seafood Festival.

The festival was originally sponsored solely by the OFF, however, in 1993 sponsorship by a local cable company and a local newspaper offered new sources of income plus increased coverage by the local news media. Income from the festival was often used to help the state organization fund legal fights over fishing regulations and individuals who might find themselves in court because of fishing violations. Some of the proceeds were used to help support local organizations, like CVHS and FISH.

The festival always generated a lot of local publicity which became important as the SOS campaign became more influential. Interviews prior to the festival were always used to comment on the proposed net ban amendment and the impact it would have. There were some attempts at the festival itself to raise awareness as informational brochures and banners were used to challenge the assumptions in the SOS campaign (Figure 5-7).

The Native's Picnic was another annual event to which many Cortesians looked forward. It was started by the director of the CVHS as an opportunity to bring many of the relatives of the original five North Carolina families together each year. It was a recreation of the traditional family get together that many Cortesians talked about in their oral histories. The picnic was held on the grounds of the old schoolhouse, owned by a tapestry artist. The Native's picnic was primarily attended by natives and their relatives, but occasional visitors were often invited. It was mostly a family affair with music and plenty of food. It was not a time for politics, but family, food and festival.

As mentioned earlier, these events seemed to be an attempt at what Hobsbawm (1983) called "invention of tradition." Often promoted in the local media, these events presented Cortez as a quaint fishing village with strong family ties and a good work ethic. They harkened back to a time when families seemed closer and the village more united.

### **Traditional Crafts and Use of Space**

In most fishing communities, a fisherman's home is also his staging area, where he works on his boat, nets and other gear. There is nowhere else to conduct the type of maintenance and repair required. A fisherman's yard gives plenty of open space where he can park his boat, hang a net or stack his crab traps for as long as he wishes. This practice creates problems when outsiders move into fishing communities as they may find this type of clutter offensive (Figure 5-8). This is especially true if gear, such as crab traps, have recently been pulled from the water and are now stored on residential property. Fish and sea life can produce highly offensive odors when exposed to hot sun and drying winds on land. These conditions have spawned many ordinances along Florida's coast regulating the use of one's yard for the storage of fishing gear.

In the past, when trailering boats was not possible, much of the maintenance on fishing boats was done near the fish house. Boatways were built near the shore so that vessels could be hauled out of the water and maintenance could be carried out. This apparatus consisted of jack-like devices that would lift the boat out of the water as each side was jacked up and boards placed beneath to hold it up between several pilings. With the introduction of fiberglass, fishing vessels became much lighter and could be hauled out of the water much easier. As a result most of the boatways have fallen into disrepair and are no longer in use. In addition, there were boat building and repair sites like Neriah Taylor's boatworks along the waterfront where he built boats with hand tools using local hardwoods for materials.



Figure 5-8. Fisherman's Yard in Cortez

Maintenance and the work of fishing changed considerably with new technology according to one fisherman:

I'll tell ya, fishin' has really changed. See today you don't have to pull your nets out and spread 'em. Most of the time you don't mend 'em. You don't lime 'em. You don't have to hang 'em yourself. Somebody usually does that for ya. You don't know have to work on skiffs and scows and net spreads. You had to build your own net spreads and keep 'em up and paint your own boats and turn 'em over. Mend your net and hang your net and lime your net. Now I tell you, you don't do one half the work by no means like you used to do to fish. Fishin' has certainly changed.<sup>33</sup>

Subsequently, a fisherman's yard has become the primary site for building and repair of boats, nets and other gear. It is not uncommon to walk the streets of Cortez and see several boats in yards and fishing gear stowed somewhere on the property or construction of a new boat or net being undertaken.

There is constant maintenance that is required of fishing vessels and gear. Nets are often torn as they may hang up on debris or rocks that sit on rugged bottom. Traps are lost in storms and vessels need regular maintenance from wear and tear. Yards are the one place where most all of this repair can take place

Net mending, using needles and twine, is an important skill for fishermen who often learn from their father or other older fishermen. If they do not possess that skill or do not have the time, there is always a retired fisherman who will offer his skill to earn extra money mending nets. Although I have seen many women build and mend nets elsewhere in Florida, I never once saw a woman work on a net in Cortez.

In fact, women were not noticeably involved in the fishing operations in Cortez. Once while sitting on my front porch, I heard a retired fisherman's wife scold her granddaughter for being on the docks as she said, "you are not to go down there, I told you that is no place for girls." This is not to say women were never on the docks or at the fish houses. They were instrumental in helping get supplies and would pack fish

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<sup>33</sup> Oral history with Stargill Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

occasionally (Figure 5-9) and women did work in the fish houses cleaning fish or in administrative roles.



Figure 5-9. Wives Packing Mullet in Ice.

The role of women was primarily supportive. There had been women who fished in Cortez, but during my stay there were no women who were actively fishing except for an occasional fishing trip with husbands or boyfriends. For the most part, women attended to the household finances and watched over children while the men were away fishing. Family outings on the boat were not uncommon, but were usually not taken during peak fishing times.

It is not unusual to find women in the supporting role, many studies of fishing families have found exactly that (Davis 1986; Dixon et al. 1984). While this may contradict the findings of another dissertation written about Cortez (Eacker 1994), women had a largely supportive role in the fishing operation. In the year and a half I lived in Cortez, I never once saw a woman offload fish at any of the docks. While they may have offloaded somewhere else, it was not a common practice on Cortez commercial docks to find women who fished on a regular basis.

### **Place Names and Sacred Places**

The concept of "place" has been a recurring theme within anthropology and seems appropriate in this discussion of a natural resource community (Rodman 1992). Although place often refers to setting, here the emphasis will be on the social construction of place, especially those meanings that stem from the "physical, emotional and experiential realities that place hold for their inhabitants...." (Rodman 1992:641).

An important feature of natural resource communities is the unique relationship that most residents have with the landscape. Because they spend a great deal of time on the water the boundaries that commercial fishermen recognize as their community go beyond the normal boundaries used to define villages or towns. Their "community" extends into the bays, sounds and rivers they must fish daily. Fishing sites used by generations of commercial fishers have unconventional names that may no longer hold significance for younger commercial fishermen but continue to be used as points of reference for navigation and fishing. Place names like "Wild Irishman's Cut," "Hottentot Bayou," or "Hell's Half Acre" are heard over and over again describing daring exploits, great catches or monumental failures. These terms are part of the local folklore and will likely





A man used to live there back in the '20s and '30s and he'd get drunk and come down there and raise the devil ya know? The guys just named him Wild Irishman and they named Wild Irishman's Cut after him.<sup>34</sup>

In an attempt to recognize the symbolic value placed upon geographical landmarks or built structures by residents within small communities, Hester (1990) has coined the term "Sacred Structures." The term defines those places (buildings, structures or open spaces) that exemplify and reinforce everyday lifeways and/or special events within the community (Hester 1990:10). The value placed upon sacred structures often stems from a long term association by community members (Platt 1991). The importance placed upon them is often subconscious and may become apparent only when the structure is threatened through redevelopment that includes alteration or destruction. To the professional planner, architect, or historian, sacred structures may have little appeal for they often consist of dilapidated buildings that were settings for daily routines, like fish processing, net mending, story telling, etc. The historic importance is often confined to local knowledge.

In Cortez, there are many Sacred Structures. They have importance because of the folk traditions that have evolved around the generational use and occupational adaptation to working within the marine environment. Such places take on new significance in the face of redevelopment and are important symbols to community members as they address change in their community. Change that comes in many forms and has often been disguised as progress with the promise of opportunity.

The Fulford Fish house would likely carry the designation as of sacred place because of the social activities that have long been associated with it. Green benches

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<sup>34</sup> Oral history with Stargill Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

where fishermen, both retired and active, would sit and discuss recent and past events have always been a part of the decor. Comments on the day's catch along with the occasional joke were often heard. The whereabouts of most any fishermen could be discovered there also. The fish house was built by Tink Fulford, recognized as one of the best fishermen in the village and who had taught many of the older retired fishermen who live in the village today how to fish. Because the Fulford Fish house relied primarily on the mullet fishery, the increasing regulations were having an impact. Not only were regulations on the water having an impact, but regulations in general forced it to close in 1993.

Sacred places are not always buildings. The "Kitchen" which is the body of water between the docks and the Audubon rookery would also be considered one of those sacred places (Figure 5-10). It holds a special place in the local folklore and was a place where many Cortesians have spent time, both past and present, in recreation and gathering food. The Kitchen is best known for its scalloping history as many village older residents remember wading in the water gather scallops in days past. The scallops have since disappeared; why, no one seems to know. Some claim they began to disappear with the placement of a sewage treatment plant to the south of the "Kitchen."

These sacred places are not often evident until they are threatened. The Albion Inn was certainly one of those places. Although village residents fought to save the Inn, from destruction, the Coast Guard nevertheless razed it. Although the Burton's store portion of the Inn was saved, it seemed a small victory in a much larger loss. The closing of the Fulford Fish house was another sacred place lost and the Kitchen has never been quite the same since the sewage treatment plant was built. All in all, it seemed Cortez was losing

many of its sacred places. The continued growth of Manatee County and its increasing emphasis upon tourism and recreation was taking its toll.

### **The Close Ties of Kinship**

As discussed in Chapter IV, several families from North Carolina formally settled Cortez. Today if you visit Morehead City or Beaufort North Carolina, you will hear and see the surnames of many Cortez residents as their relatives still live and fish in that part of Carteret County. As one retired fishermen pointed out when asked where his father was born:

He came to Cortez when he was a young feller. Ninety percent of the people in Cortez come from North Carolina. Practically all of 'em tar heels. It's a fact. I heard them talking about that, my father and my mother was mighty young when they came to Cortez.<sup>35</sup>

The descendents of those North Carolina settlers still live in and around Cortez. The homes in Cortez are still referred to as Aunt Letha's or Capt. Billy's house when giving directions. There were strong kinship ties in Cortez. The native's picnic was a somewhat overt attempt at displaying that closeness, but smaller family gatherings occurred regularly. Almost any event held in the village turned into a potluck affair with plenty of food and drink. Although alcohol was tolerated, it was never part of family gatherings, unless a special occasion such as weddings or other types of celebrations. Families worked together. The fish houses are owned and operated by family members or distant relatives. The ties were not always obvious and it was only after some follow-up on vague references that one might discover the relationship.

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<sup>35</sup> Oral History with Paul Taylor, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage Oral History Archive, Cortez, Florida.

The CVHS compiled a list of family members with a small grant from the Florida Humanities Council and produced a booklet "The Cortez Families." In the brochure there were listed the genealogy of 19 families whose descendants still live in Cortez. In addition, the National Register Project listed over 100 homes in Cortez and briefly described their history and present owners who were often descendants of those early fishermen from North Carolina. The project resulted in designation of a portion of the historic village as a National Register district (Cortez Village Historical Society and Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage 1992). That designation could help protect the village from future attempts to develop waterfront property.

The close kinship ties are obvious in Cortez and manifest themselves through the important extended family gatherings that are often annual events. Smaller nuclear family dinners were common throughout the year and yearly visits by distant relatives were also common. Trips to North Carolina to visit relatives were not as common but did occur.

These important characteristics that I have outlined help underscore the significant relationship between both the physical and social environment of a natural resource community. Cortez like other fishing communities displays a social life that is clearly tied to the natural, sometimes chaotic, cycles of the marine environment. Work and play in this community have been dictated by those cycles. Fishermen show a strong commitment to their work and an even stronger tie to their community (Acheson 1981). The interconnectedness between work and social life becomes easily demonstrable when viewed over time through the annual cycles of resource availability and seasonal climate change which all fishing communities must endure.

However, that close relationship to the resource has been constantly challenged and slowly changed. As Florida's coastline continues to grow, the increasing population of outsiders has little knowledge of the traditional lifestyle within a fishing community and would not recognize many of their sacred places. These newcomers to Florida's coast have come to enjoy the warm weather and beauty of the coastline. They have difficulty reconciling smelling traps and fishing gear in their neighbor's yard and often resent the clutter and noise of boat and gear repair that often takes place in a fisherman's yard. They see commercial fishing as a quaint and appealing icon, but want nothing to do with the reality of the everyday life involved in making a living from the sea. As Florida's coastal population increases with retirees and those interested in living in leisure and recreational communities, there will be increasing conflict between these disparate populations. Increasing regulation on both land and water will have an impact as the traditional livelihood and folklife associated with fishing slowly disappears.

## CHAPTER 6

### CULTURAL RESISTANCE IN CORTEZ

Early in 1991, Florida Sportsman publisher Karl Wickstrom posed a question to his readers: "Would you support a constitutional amendment forcing commercial netting from Florida waters?" More than 99 percent of FS readers who are predominantly sport fishermen responded in favor of the net ban....The well-heeled commercial fishing industry has had a strangle-hold on Tallahassee for the better part of this century. There will be no meaningful help coming from that quarter....For now the ball is in the Florida Conservation Association's court....There could be a constitutional ban on netting in effect by January 1 1993, but don't count on it. (Hill 1992)

At face value, the "net ban" campaign seemed like one more environmental movement to most Floridians. The images and associated rhetoric ("Save our Sealife") implied some urgency with the need to remove entanglement nets from state waters in order to conserve marine resources. Indeed, with a name like Florida Conservation Association (FCA), there was scant evidence that the chief promoter of the movement was, in reality, a special interest group for recreational fishermen. Image was important to the campaign, not only for the FCA, but for the counter movement by commercial fishermen as well. In fact, a number of contested images were used repeatedly throughout the campaign by both sides to win over an uninformed public.

These "essentialized images" are important features of any encounter with environmentalism (Brosius 1999). Undeniably, these issues are complex, but the images represent important links to the political underpinnings of social movements. Furthermore, issues of motivation, class and empowerment and disempowerment underlie the identity politics that are part of such "new social movements."

In this chapter, I intend to explore the issue of resistance and how it relates to these important aspects of political ecology as they evolved throughout the discourse of the net ban campaign. Furthermore, a discussion of the various "regimes of nature" (Escobar 1999) will be included as it seems another important point of departure for the discourse of environmental conflicts as scientists, managers and fishermen debate the "true" nature of the marine environment. Finally, I discuss the cultural resistance undertaken by the community and on the water by the fishermen, offering some perspective of its nature and impact.

### **Issues, Identities and Interests**

As I mentioned in the introduction, I asked a retired Cortez commercial fisherman what he thought of my planned move to the village to conduct dissertation fieldwork in November 1991. I explained that I was interested in spending time with commercial net fishers to gain an understanding of their fishing methods and how they interacted with their environment. He thought it was a great idea but he had one request, "Just tell them the truth!" I immediately understood that by "them" he meant the general public and that the "truth" was something other than what had been appearing in "Outdoors" section of local newspapers all over the state for the past several months or recreational fishing magazines (Figure 6-1). These images combined with statements like, "Fish are disappearing from Florida's coastlines. Sport fishermen and conservationists claim commercial nets are wiping them out, that the nets must be stopped before it's too late" (Milligan 1993:G1) or "Every year this bycatch is measured in millions of pounds. As well as killing unwanted and protected finfish, the nets are killing endangered sea turtles, bottlenose dolphins and even manatees" (Kozlowski 1993:8) were placing commercial fishing in the middle of a growing conflict over marine resources.



The "truth" would be a rather elusive subject over the next year and a half as the campaign to remove entanglement nets from Florida's inshore waters gained momentum. I had recently traveled the state interviewing net fishing families about the perceived impact of increased commercial fishing regulations on their family life during the past year; they too, wanted the truth to be known. The study examined perceived stress as a result of increased regulation of the inshore gill net fishery (Smith 1995). While many families described increased financial, emotional and psychological stress because of increasing regulation of the industry, they also reported a change in the public's perception of their occupation and community (Smith and Jepson 1993; Thunberg, Smith and Jepson 1994).

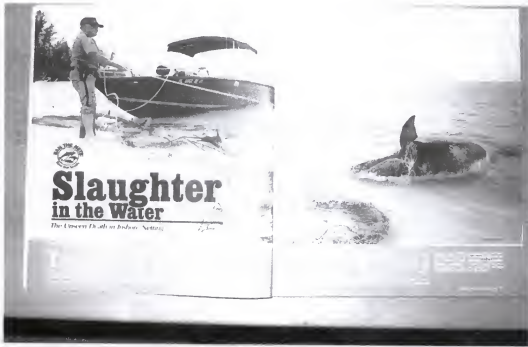


Figure 6-1. Image of Dolphin Caught in Net in Florida Sportsman, March 1992

In each community visited by the research team, accounts of verbal abuse at the hands of recreational fishers and residents of leisure communities were commonplace (Smith and Jepson 1993). In addition, many of those we interviewed complained of

outdoor writers in local papers who were slandering commercial fishermen and their occupation. These writers accused commercial fishermen of being responsible for the decline of various fisheries. To further sensationalize these claims and denigrate the image of net fishing, vivid photographs of turtles or porpoise caught in gill nets would often accompany a story (Figure 6-1). These photographs and stories were not always accurate portrayals of the small gill net fishery in Florida. The bycatch figure of 10 pounds per 1 pound of useable catch that was often cited was for the offshore shrimp fishery which would not be affected by the net ban. Furthermore, dolphin deaths were rare in the Florida inshore gill net fishery and because nets were tended regularly, fishermen were able to free turtles long before they were in danger. Yet, the figures used were highly inflated and misleading as to their source. However, accuracy was not a concern since the intent was the exploitation of an uninformed public.

These "essentialized" images, essential to making the case that Florida's marine life was in peril, were important in establishing the credibility of the SOS campaign as conservation oriented. By giving the impression that Florida's marine resources were under duress, the net ban campaign was placing the campaign and its supporters clearly in the environmentalist camp, but it also implied a certain credibility associated with their statements about the status of Florida's marine resources; credibility which the general public did not question and the commercial fishing industry disputed.

Regardless of the status of the stocks, the question posed by commercial fishermen was whether the proponents of the net ban campaign were more interested in conserving the resource or eliminating the competition. For commercial fishermen, the intent of the net ban movement was clear and that was to remove them from state waters. The SOS

campaign was not a newly established environmental movement and they challenged the image of the net ban as being an endeavor in conservation.

The SOS campaign was attempting to take advantage of Americans' support for the environmental movement (Kuzmiak 1991). By placing the net ban into the context of conservation they could build the case for removing nets and cast commercial fishermen as anti-environment. Conservation is a key term as it can have many different meanings to different people. For one person conserving resources could be well managed consumptive use; while to another it could mean no consumptive use at all. As discussed earlier, Florida's marine resources were being managed by the FMFC or you could say they were being conserved. The recreational fishing interest groups were challenging the idea that Florida's marine resources were being conserved through present management.

While interviewing shrimp fishermen in Alabama in 1985 during my initial venture into maritime anthropology, I recall one shrimper telling me about a group called the Gulf Coast Conservation Association (GCCA) that had formed in Texas. He said that the founder of that group had the removal of commercial fishing from all state waters as one of his primary objectives. He considered the beginning of that campaign to have already occurred with the recent designation of red drum (redfish) and speckled sea trout as game fish (recreational take only) in Texas. That designation was strongly supported by the GCCA. He went on to say that there was a new push to remove gillnets entirely from state waters in Texas. This fisherman was familiar with these circumstances because one of his brothers had moved to Texas and was working there as a commercial fisherman.

In 1989 while I was working on a project interviewing bay shrimp fishermen in Texas (Maril 1995), I later spoke with the brother of that Alabama shrimper. He told me

that in 1988 the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) banned the use of gillnets by commercial fin fishermen and that fishermen protested by burning their nets and boats. Texas commercial fishermen began using cast nets for capturing mullet, but were later informed that the law forbids the use of cast nets and that they could be used for capturing bait only. The banning of gill nets by the TWPD was supposedly at the behest of recreational fishing interest groups in the state, the largest of which was the GCCA (Fritchey 1994; Maril 1995).

Florida fishermen were suspicious that a similar campaign was being initiated in their state as the Florida Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC) had already provided game fish status for redfish in 1988, prohibiting all commercial harvest (Lampl 1986). Although recreational harvest of redfish was not allowed initially, they were later allowed to keep one fish. Again, the main proponent of the change in regulations was the Florida Chapter of the Gulf Coast Conservation Association.<sup>1</sup>

The overall agenda of the Save Our Sealife Campaign can only be speculated upon here. It may have been conservation oriented, but much of the rhetoric lacked a true conservation tone and the target was very narrow with its focus on commercial net fishing. For example, an associate editor of the Florida Sportsman Magazine was quoted: "The gillnet cuts a swath of destruction through our marine resources just as effectively, and just as wastefully as the punt guns did to waterfowl a hundred years ago" (Law 1992:17). Their stated intent was one of conservation as they claimed the banning of nets would help many overfished fish stocks become healthy once again. Furthermore, it was

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<sup>1</sup> The Florida Chapter of the Gulf Coast Conservation Association organized under the name the Florida Conservation Association (FCA) in 1985. Most recently, the group has become the Florida chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association (CCA).

their claim that many protected species, such as sea turtles and dolphins, were being harmed by gill nets. The rhetoric of the net ban campaign portrayed commercial fishermen as unregulated and highly detrimental to fish stocks as they captured thousands of pounds of fish at one time as evidenced by their slogan, "One fish at a time, not a ton at a time."

The role of mainstream environmental groups during the campaign was more perceptible. An attempt was made to align the movement with conventional environmental groups during much of the campaign. Supporters of the net ban lobbied conservation organizations to lend their names to the net ban campaign but, had not been successful in engendering much support.<sup>2</sup> The initial listing of supporting organizations included Florida Conservation Association, Florida League of Anglers, Florida Coalition of Fishing Clubs and Florida Wildlife Federation which are all sportsman organizations. None of the more popular and well known environmental groups (Sierra Club, World Wildlife Fund, Greenpeace, Audubon, Wildlife Conservation Society) had signed on to the campaign in the beginning.

It was later in the campaign when more mainstream, although not well known, environmental groups began to add their names to the list of supporting organizations, e.g., Sierra Club Defense Fund, (not part of Sierra Club) and the Caribbean Conservation Association. Late in 1994 the Florida Audubon Board of Directors formally declared its support for the net ban amendment with some caveats, pointing to many detractors of recreational fishing also (Editorial 1994). According to one individual, the Board of Directors had appointed a special committee to draft a report on both sides of the issue

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<sup>2</sup> Personal communication with Kathleen Williams, Wildlife Conservation Society, Latin American Office, Gainesville, Florida.

and present it prior to their decision to support either side. Evidently, the committee did not have sufficient time to present their findings before board members supporting the initiative were able to persuade a vote and Florida Audubon publicly announced their support for the net ban campaign according to this source.<sup>3</sup>

This importance of image and its impact upon their industry was not lost on commercial fishermen. In an interview with a local newspaper the president of FISH alluded to the "killer" image of commercial fishermen that seemed so pervasive in the news media. He was worried as to how the general public would judge his profession if it came to a ballot referendum (Quinlan 1992). Others in the community were also concerned and were attempting to address that image through various means.

In early December a film crew arrived at one of the Cortez fish houses. They were shooting a segment of Florida Crossroads about the net ban campaign for public television that would feature Cortez net fishermen. The Florida Crossroads segment turned out to be somewhat controversial because it discredited several of the claims made by the coalition to ban nets. It stated that dolphin deaths were very rare in the net fishery, especially for the Gulf coast inshore net fishery. The graphic image of dolphins caught in a gill net was a powerful one often used in the net ban campaign. Additionally, the Crossroads segment pointed out that sea turtles were also rarely caught in nets on the Gulf coast and that in the one area of the state where there had been a problem, the state had regulations in place which dramatically reduced the number of turtle deaths. All in all, the program was very favorable to the commercial sector and the SOS campaign was not pleased with the program.

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<sup>3</sup> Personal communication with Judy Brueggeman, Florida Audubon Board of Directors.

On the same day the film crew from Florida Crossroads arrived in Cortez, a reporter from the WMNF radio station in Tampa arrived to interview the director of FISH and me about the Florida Humanities project called Vanishing Culture. In that interview we attempted to make the case that the net ban would be harmful to a segment of Florida's culture, highlighting the rich traditions of commercial fishing that would be lost if the net ban were successful. The WMNF interview was broadcast on Florida public radio several weeks later.

The foremost image that commercial fishermen wished the public to see was that they were an important part of Florida's heritage, while at the same time an important provider of food, especially for those who could not fish for themselves. This theme was often repeated in newspapers around the state as the campaign wore on. Fishermen from Cortez began to contact an assortment of groups and the emergence of certain alliances became rather interesting as they attempted to align themselves with groups who had historically been subjected to considerable discrimination, such as African and Native Americans.

One rather interesting image of commercial fishermen was forming as they enlisted the Rainbow Coalition of Seafood Consumers of Jacksonville to oppose the net ban. This was a small minority group organized around the issue of affordable seafood. Their brochures stated that mullet was an inexpensive source of seafood marketed to low income blacks in north Florida and Georgia and if the net ban was successful mullet prices would increase substantially affecting their access to an important food source. This partnership seemed a little ironic given the often prejudicial attitudes of many

Cortesians toward blacks mentioned earlier (Green 1985). There were blacks who worked in Cortez fish houses, but there were none living within the village.

Another alliance that offered an uncertain image was explored at a rally to challenge the County's annual Desoto Festival honoring Hernando Desoto. Native American groups were protesting a festival honoring the Spanish conquistador who had wreaked havoc among so many of Florida's earliest inhabitants. The director of FISH and some fishermen from Cortez met with Russell Means of the American Indian Movement (AIM). They discussed the possibility of collaborating with AIM on a cultural exchange project. A future meeting with AIM member Barking Dog was to be setup with three FISH board members to discuss further collaborations.

Although the future meetings never took place, this meeting was intriguing for I had recently explored the theme of uncertain identity among the Florida fishing families during another research project. At that time, fishermen and their wives made frequent comparisons of their predicament to that of Native Americans and their history of being pushed off land they had traditionally hunted (Smith and Jepson 1993). Here again, commercial fishermen were aligning themselves with groups who historically had suffered at the hands of a cruel majority.

Much like the indigenous Kayapo (Turner 1992), commercial fishermen were trying to appropriate their image; an image they felt had been "expropriated" by their opponents in the net ban campaign. As Turner points out, this appropriation of image typically occurs during movements for self-identification and resistance (Turner 1992:5). Certainly, utilizing the news media and creating alliances with other oppressed peoples



were attempts at appropriating an image of commercial fishing that would counter the image being proffered by the SOS campaign.

Like the Kayapo, many indigenous peoples around the world are faced with the press of modernity through development and/or conservation and form resistance to what ultimately could force them from their native land; a very common problem when parks and people clash (Orlove and Brush 1996). Using the media to manipulate symbols to define the conflict is also common as Landsman (1988) discovered during confrontations as Mohawk Indians were resettled in upstate New York. The Cortesians and commercial fishermen in general, face a very similar situation and have resisted development in a similar fashion. Although they do not reside in a park, as mentioned earlier they have made reference to being pushed off their "reservation" by the opposition; an opposition that includes government officials, conservationists and sport fishing groups.

The village of Cortez has a history of appropriating its image, or at least possibly manipulating its image for the media. These attempts were primarily through the efforts of the local historical society by publishing books, videos and conducting interviews for the local papers. In his book "The Finest Kind," the grandson of a local fisherman and son of the CVHS director (Green 1985) documented Cortez history with a slight bias toward his own family history. Such appropriations of image are often challenged, as was this particular image when another history of the community was written by local historian Doris Green (n.d.). The historical society produced many images of the community through videos and brochures documenting the history of commercial fishing in the village.

The director of FISH was also concerned about attempts to "expropriate" the image of Cortez. He was very protective of Cortez images and had expressed the need for FISH to copyright these images (mostly photos he had taken). He expressed considerable dismay after he learned that the county tourism director had sent the State Bureau of Tourism photographer to take pictures of Cortez. In the eyes of the FISH director, the most appropriate images of Cortez came from his camera lens.

Other attempts at image appropriation were being undertaken through the National Register and the Vanishing Culture projects. The National Register project would create a National Register District that would encompass a large part of the historic village south of Cortez road with the National Register of Historic Places. The Vanishing Culture project would document the traditional fishing culture of the village through photographs, oral histories and stations placed around the village. Each in its own way would make the case that Florida's commercial fishing industry was an important part of Florida's overall history and culture; consistent with the theme being offered to counter the net ban campaign.

One other attempt at image appropriation is worth mentioning for it addresses both the image of commercial fishermen and their opponents. The director of FISH, the festival director and I attended a reading by the author Peter Matthiessen at a local library; Mr. Matthiessen was the author of the book *Men's Lives* (1986) that chronicled the fight between recreational and commercial fishermen over striped bass on Long Island, New York. Afterward, as we stood in line to get autographs, I urged the festival director to ask him if he would be interested in coming to Cortez to speak about the net ban campaign. He said he would be interested as he was thinking of returning to the area

in May. We later contacted the University of South Florida and started the collaboration to bring Mr. Matthiessen to Cortez.



Figure 6-2. Author Peter Matthiessen with Cortez Historian, Doris Green.

The Peter Matthiessen lecture was held at the University of South Florida, New College in September of 1994. His lecture was well attended with over 200 people in the auditorium. He expressed his disillusionment with environmental groups that use high profile resource conflicts to promote conservation. He gave an example how Greenpeace used graphic photos of tribal peoples clubbing dolphins in a practice they had used for centuries. He pointed out that the harvest was humane, happening once a year and that very few dolphins were harvested. He equated the Greenpeace tactic, which he labeled "green fundamentalism," to the recent net ban campaign and drew some parallels to his experience on Long Island with the striped bass controversy between commercial and recreational fishermen of New York. Overall, his talk was well received and was covered

by the local media. Several features appeared the next day in Sarasota and Bradenton area papers.

The next day Mr. Matthiessen visited Cortez (Figure 6-2) and was given a tour of the waterfront in another media opportunity. I conducted a videotaped interview with him addressing specific issues with the net ban and correlating his experience with striped bass and the book *Men's Lives* with the circumstances occurring in Florida. His lecture was also taped and he gave permission to use these items to oppose the net ban campaign. We offered these resources to the OFF and other commercial fishing organizations, but they showed little interest. Mr. Matthiessen later sent a letter to the Florida Audubon Board of Directors urging them not to support the net ban campaign several months after his visit.

The media played a critical role in shaping the image commercial fishing. While they maintained the romantic identity of the cowboy, the loner and strong silent type with a resolute commitment to independence (Agar, 1986; Bellah, 1985; Smith and Jepson, 1993), the image of commercial fishermen that prevailed was that of outlaw which was embraced by their detractors and the majority of voters (Ritchie 1994). Proponents of the Save Our Sealife campaign used sports fishing magazines, outdoor columns and a well financed media blitz to portray commercial fishers as environmental outlaws plundering the marine resources of the state. In contrast, they cast themselves as conservationists and good stewards of the ecosystem. In the weeks prior to the vote, images of dead porpoise and sea turtles entangled in nets were broadcast over both the electronic and print news media overwhelming commercial fishing industry attempts to focus the debate on the loss of their livelihood as food providers. Last minute attempts to point out

discrepancies in the SOS campaign fell on deaf ears as the metaphor of commercial fishers as outlaws was deeply ingrained in the voting public's mind.

The commercial fishing industry was confronting a powerful interest group vying for control over coastal resources important to both sides. The recreational sector had become powerful over the years because of the sheer growth in their numbers.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Survey there were approximately 3.1 million anglers in Florida in 2001 and 2.1 million of those were state residents. Since 1991 that number had grown 16 percent (U.S. Department of the Interior 2001). In addition, the decision to organize against commercial net fishermen became a priority of a well-focused and financed campaign. Utilizing knowledge and experience with the media, sports fishing lobbyists were able to build a large coalition of sports fishing clubs and individual fishermen who were willing to do whatever it took to get the amendment passed. Those numbers, organization and financial resources translated into substantial political power in a so-called grassroots movement.

Commercial fishermen, on the other hand were relying on an older established network of political power based more on a "good old boy" network that was losing influence, both at the state level and locally. They often relied on influence with the Governor's Cabinet to often delay or derail fisheries management actions. They did not have the necessary knowledge or resources to manipulate the media to their advantage. They used a more personal and cumbersome network of personal connections to try and counter the image being used by their opponents. The contrast between these two approaches is more than just different means to an end and is indicative of class differences that may not be readily apparent.

### **Class, Power and Knowledge in a Natural Resource Conflict**

There is no question that, overall, the world's fisheries have seen a decline. But, as McGoodwin (1990) points out, it is often the more sustainable fisheries, the small-scale fisheries that are pushed aside in favor of the more economically efficient and capital intensive ones. Looking at the plight of the world's fisheries makes it difficult to understand impact of local fisheries and it is all too easy to lump all fishermen under the same umbrella that includes large trawlers to small skiffs (Steinhart 1994). But, fisheries managers often focus primarily on the biological or the economic, with social and cultural considerations coming later. This ignores some of the more feasible and sustainable conservation strategies that have been developed locally among fishermen themselves (McGoodwin 1990). With environmental groups touting the decline in the world's fisheries, it was easy for the SOS campaign to jump on the bandwagon and suggest that the small-scale net fishery in Florida was just another part of the problem.

The disadvantage commercial fishermen and their communities experience through class struggles for control over natural resources and development has previously been documented along the U.S. Gulf coast and in Florida (Durrenberger 1990; Meltzoff 1989; Soden 1989). But, as we examine this issue of class within social movements it is obvious that some refinement is needed, as the classic Marxist model has had difficulty accounting for more than a materialist objective within these movements (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Walsh 1988; Rose 1997). The increasingly well-off middle class in the United States and its role in "new social movements" seem to confound the traditional relationship between class and social mobilization. A persistent question has been: Where is the working class and why is it not more involved in class-based politics?

The net ban campaign provides an interesting context to evaluate the role of class through what is called "class-cultural" theory (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989; Rose 1997). Class-cultural theory examines the important interdependence of interests, values and ideas within class that define distinct forms of political and organizational behavior without predicting the content of movement issues or politics. By contrasting middle- and working class material and cultural structures like work organization and authority relationships, important insights into the motivations for either class can be offered that are not hampered by a strict materialist explanation (Rose 1997).

Working class occupations often require manual labor and offer little autonomy over the work process. Furthermore, conformity to rules that are often imposed by others who are external to the work environment is commonplace (Rose 1997). These types of jobs are usually repetitive and routine, requiring physical skill and stamina, but limited intellectual engagement. To express autonomy in their work, the working class engages in daily forms of resistance with authority figures. In contrast, the professional middle class has considerable autonomy over the work process and places more emphasis on higher education. It is "organized around a culture of autonomy, personal responsibility, intellectual engagement, variability and change" (Rose 1997:478).

Furthermore, strategies for social movements take different form within each class:

In sum, working class people live in a system of enforced authority, and they tend to approach social change through organizing around immediate, perceived interests. Professional middle-class life is regulated by internalized norms, ambitions, and responsibilities and these movements tend to see change as a process of education about values (Rose, 1997:478).

This distinction generates different class based forms of politics and social movements with working class movements focused on immediate economic and social interests, while middle class movements more often address universal goods that are non-

economic. One key component of middle class culture is its faith in expertise-based knowledge and change; an acceptance of rational and technical explanations. Because most people who work for the government are also middle class, the bureaucracy appears far more benevolent and accessible to the middle-class because they better understand the language of science. This familiarity gives the middle-class an advantage of influence over those in power that the working class does not share (Rose 1997:481).

These differences are important for understanding the net ban campaign and the years of conflict between recreational and commercial fishermen. The supporters of the net ban are more likely to be middle class and to reflect middle class values, while commercial fishermen and their communities reflect working class values. Of course, these terms are used as idealized types. I realize that supporters of the net ban may come from various social classes and that commercial fishermen may not always consider themselves working class. But, the form and structure of this conflict, in general, reflects class-cultural differences (LiPuma and Meltzoff 1989; Rose 1997). This is particularly evident as the net ban supporters first tried to persuade the Marine Fisheries Commission, then the State Legislature to impose a ban on net fishing. In each case, they worked diligently through the bureaucracy to effect change, but were unsuccessful in that endeavor. Recreational fishermen and their associations are more at ease with public speaking and are used to working within bureaucracies; this is because many of them are likely to do the same in their work. So, recreational fishing groups attempt to address fisheries management through bureaucratic influence, whereas commercial fishermen would often thwart such attempts at the end of the management process through political ties with the Governor and Cabinet, as they had final approval of rules and regulations.



The frustrations for the recreational fishing groups in their failure at one level of bureaucracy then lead them to undertake another bureaucratic avenue through state laws regarding ballot initiatives.

There are distinct power differentials in terms of resources, both monetary and non-monetary, that stem from these class differences. Because members of recreational fishing groups are more likely to be middle class and professional, they are better educated and benefit from the aforementioned familiarity with the bureaucracy of fishery management. They have more resources financially and can organize around broader issues that are not of immediate concern, thereby ensuring willing participation over an extended period of time. But an even more distinct difference may be the acceptance of rational scientific management of fisheries resources by the middle class.

The problems and difficulties that commercial fishermen experience through the discourse of scientific management of fisheries have been summarized before (Durrenberger 1990; Smith, M.E. 1990). Furthermore, attempts to introduce social science into fisheries management has not always been well received (Paredes 1985). More recently, Paolisso (2002) finds that crab fishermen in the Chesapeake area tend to place their faith in God and not with scientific models when it comes to explaining the cycles of the marine environment. He points out that they see too many variables at work in nature for any explanatory role of scientific models and they consider unpredictability as part of God's plan. Furthermore, they perceive fisheries scientists as being intolerant in that they do not allow for other explanations of crab behavior; if science cannot explain it, the model is wrong.

These views are very similar to those I have heard expressed by fishermen from Cortez and other parts of Florida and the Gulf coast. Distrust of scientific management is often reinforced as fishermen see scientific models being used that seem incomplete. One example was provided during a meeting of the OFF Mullet Species Committee in Tampa. A biologist with the DNR presented data used to analyze the present state of mullet stocks. As he pointed out, one of the difficulties in analyzing mullet stocks was that the data being used were relatively new; tagging data were being collected for the first time that year. Other indices used in the complex model, like that for juvenile mullet, included data for only three years, while the stock assessment model needed at least eight or nine years.

It was obvious that the stock assessment was incomplete and lacking key data elements as the DNR biologist was requesting help from the fishermen in gathering certain types of data to fill in those gaps. These lapses in stock assessment modeling give fishermen pause, especially when their own assessment, based upon what they see on the water, does not always mesh with the state's assessment of the fishery. In some cases, the OFF has hired their own biologist to offer alternative assessments. In other cases, fishermen completely discount the state's assessment. As a fisherman once commented upon the state's attempt to describe an assessment of redfish, "and do you know they said they flew in an airplane and counted all of those redfish" or another who asked how those scientists expected to catch any fish with their sampling net high and dry during low tide. Some of this distrust with how the science is conducted can be attributed to unfamiliarity with the scientific method. But, their distrust is not only with sampling nets and fish

counts. Their distrust is much more deep seated and is likely tied to class cultural beliefs about nature and its connection to God.

It has been a principal axiom of modernity to separate the two types of knowledge according to Kroll-Smith and Floyd (1997). Expert knowledge, the knowledge based on science and held by experts, is the preferred knowledge in state sponsored sciences and Lay, or Narrative knowledge will always be secondary. But, this dualism may be failing as popular rationality begins to blend both narrative and scientific ways of knowing in the field of environmental illness. Like so many other dualisms of modern society (e.g. masculine-feminine, subjective-objective) there seems to be a collapse of these bipolar, complementary ways of knowing as individuals begin to combine both (Kroll-Smith and Floyd 1997).

The difficulty in accepting rational management of fisheries is part of the class-culture difference but is also illustrative of what Escobar (1999) calls different "regimes of nature" which have important implications for the circuits of power and knowledge, especially in managing natural resources. In characterizing three distinct nature regimes, capitalist, organic and techno, Escobar explains key differences in how actors involved in environmental conflict conceptualize nature based upon the social, political and economic relations which surround their daily lives. Capitalist nature is uniform, legible, manageable, and harvestable, but most of all appropriated, processed and transformed by expertise knowledge. In contrast organic nature is embedded within culture and largely based upon local or traditional knowledge. Techno nature offers an entirely new view that is "virtual" and marks the decline of place and territory offering instead the global delocalization of human activity and devaluation of local time. Within each of these

"natures" there is an underlying system of beliefs that becomes reinforced through the context of daily life experience. Therefore to accept another "regime of nature" requires much more than awareness of its existence. It means understanding an entirely different view of the world within which one works and lives.

Fishermen from Cortez and elsewhere often believe that God will take care of "Mother Nature" and they place their faith in the divine, rather than scientific theories that often guide fishery management; they see nature as inherently irregular and sometimes unpredictable (M. E. Smith 1990). Their "organic" nature may be cyclical, but dramatic change is anticipated from years of observation and knowledge passed down from others. This belief is often in contrast, to the "capitalist regime of nature" which is often shared by fishery managers and possibly the larger society. In the "capitalist regime," nature should be orderly and drastic changes are not good for the environment or the markets. There tends to be an emphasis upon economic efficiency and stable markets. This is not to say that fishermen do not appreciate these things, it is only to say that they likely do not approach their livelihood with such a view. Proponents of the net ban often claimed a greater economic impact of recreational fisheries to that of commercial fisheries as partial justification for the net ban (Farron 1994; Ditton 1994). Some fishery managers would also support such a justification if not for the economic benefit, but from the standpoint of simplifying management by removing one more source of conflict.

The hegemonic belief in science to provide answers and solutions is especially strong with regard to the environment. Milon et al. (1998) found a large majority of

respondents to a statewide Florida survey were supportive of the New Environmental Paradigm (NEP) and a majority also supported more funding for environmental research.

Table 6-1. The Marine Environmental Concern Scale for Commercial and Recreational Fishermen from Florida.

Environmental Concern Item	Commercial Mean (n=150)	Recreational Mean (n=344)
a. The marine environment is delicate and easily upset.	2.49	1.74
b. My own fishing activity has no effect on the quantity of fish available to others.	3.51	2.44
c. Most of the concern about over-fishing has been exaggerated.	2.47	4.46
d. There is such a strong demand for fishing that it justifies relaxing some government regulations.	2.97	4.32
e. The most important thing to consider when regulating fisheries is the number of jobs created by the activity.	3.00	4.81
f. The government will have to introduce harsh measures to protect fishery stocks since few people will regulate them themselves.	4.06	3.04
g. We have a responsibility to protect the marine environment even if it means restricting development.	2.11	1.82
h. I would be willing to make personal sacrifices for the sake of protecting fishery stocks even though the immediate results may not be apparent.	2.65	2.18
i. There is a limit to the number of people who can fish Florida's waters.	2.83	3.40

The New Environmental Paradigm scale has been used over many years as a measure of environmental concern (Dunlap and Van Liere 1978). The NEP is a general measure of environmental concern with a multi-dimensional orientation that can be broken down into three distinct areas 1) balance of nature; 2) limits to growth; and 3) man over nature (Albrecht et. al 1982). In order to measure specific attitudes toward the marine environment and issues related to saltwater fishing, I reworded the NEP scale items to reflect specific concern for the marine environment (Table 6-1) and added the

questions to surveys being conducted with both commercial and recreational fishermen in the state.

The Marine Environmental Concern Scale was administered on two different surveys to two different populations. The first was a sample of two thousand recreational fishermen selected from a random phone survey conducted by the National Marine Fisheries Service with Florida households as part of a study on marine recreational fishing participation (Milon and Thunberg 1993); results of 344 mail surveys are used here. The second sample was part of a larger study examining changing marine fisheries regulations and family stress and coping conducted with 95 married couples living in ten Florida communities (Smith and Jepson 1993). Data for the latter study were gathered through face-to-face interviews with husband and wife and 150 cases were used.

The Marine Environmental Concern Scale consisted of nine items like the NEP scale. Respondents were asked to indicate their agreement with each statement on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly agree (1), to strongly disagree (6). A series of statistical tests were performed on the items to measure correlations between subscales and reliability, but problems with internal consistency were apparent. Further analysis indicated there were problems with construct validity among subscales and the items did not constitute a scale. Therefore only general statements about the direction and magnitude of responses can be made.

The results of the two surveys, while not statistically comparable still provide some interesting results for discussion. Commercial fishermen tend to agree with the statement that the marine environment is delicate and easily upset, but not as much as recreational fishermen. This is consistent with other reports that commercial fishermen tend to see

the marine environment as being self-regulating (Paolisso 2002; M.E.Smith 1990). In terms of fishing effort having no effect on the amount of fish available to others, recreational fishermen tend to agree with the statement, while commercial fishermen disagree. This may be largely due to the fact that recreational fishermen see themselves as taking a small portion individually and have difficulty comprehending the cumulative impact of thousands of angler's harvesting potential on any given day. After all, a slogan for the SOS campaign was "One fish at a time, not a ton at a time." Commercial fishermen, on the other hand, are very competitive and recognize their ability to catch fish may often mean opportunities for others are diminished. Commercial fishermen tend to agree with the next three statements which include exaggeration about over-fishing, a need to relax government regulations and the need to consider jobs in regulating fisheries. All three items tap into the perception that commercial fishermen consider their industry as being overregulated, while recreational fishermen, in contrast, consider it under-regulated. Responses to item f tend to reflect those same attitudes as commercial fishermen do not agree that harsh measures would need to be introduced since people will not regulate themselves; recreational fishermen do agree with the statement. This may be an important contrast as commercial fishermen often contend that they can regulate themselves and see fisheries management as being oppressive. Of the last three items, the last item shows the most divergence in agreement. When it comes to limiting the number of people who fish Florida's waters, commercial fishermen agree more strongly with the statement than do recreational fishermen. This may be due to commercial fishermen being more familiar with limited entry fisheries. Recreational fishermen are not restricted by limited entry, although some have suggested such an alternative to curb

recreational fishing effort, something recreational fishing advocates ridicule (Longman 1992).

Overall, recreational fishermen tend to show stronger agreement with the tenets of the New Environmental Paradigm than do commercial fishermen. While this may not be a statistically significant difference, the results suggest that there may be real differences in how commercial and recreational fishermen in Florida exhibit concern about the marine environment. Recreational fishermen who are more likely middle class with more education and a higher socioeconomic status than commercial fishermen are more likely to adhere to the capitalist or techno regime of nature.

In either case, whether the capitalist regime or techno regime of nature, there are distinct differences compared to the organic regime. Therefore, any opposition by fishermen to scientific based management might be seen largely as resistance to any type of regulation and not a question of the validity of scientific models or the application of a complex belief system about nature.

Commercial fishermen have a tendency to adhere more to an organic regime of nature. If fisheries managers and supporters of the net ban adhere to other regimes of nature, then barriers to any attempt to resolve issues on how to protect or manage fisheries do exist and need to be addressed. Resistance to management, then, is more than a mere aversion toward regulation and requires new alternatives for resolution (McCay and Jentoft 1996; Paolisso 2002). Furthermore, commercial fishermen may disagree with many aspects of rational scientific management but may accept it for reasons that are external to the scientific process (Weeks and Packard 1997). Resistance is not merely disdain for the law; it is an integral part of the culture.



Resistance to fisheries regulations was going to be a key in the net ban campaign as recreational interests were already pointing to the present resistance by the commercial industry to new mullet regulation as evidence of their lack of concern for the resource (Editorial 1992). Such resistance would help fuel the portrayal of commercial fishermen as poor stewards of the resource and assist in creating a negative image of commercial fishermen for Florida voters in the ongoing media campaign to support the "net ban."

### **Resistance, Both Within and Without**

As mentioned earlier, resistance in Cortez seemed to take two forms; one was the more open, formal and public form that often used the media for publicity for the community and commercial fishing. The other was the more informal resistance on the water that generated a poor image that hampered industry efforts to counter their antagonists' representation of commercial fishing. Both were integral to the cultural traditions within the community.



Figure 6-3. Tallahassee Mullet Ruling Protest.

The more formal resistance was undertaken largely through the organizations within the community: OFF, CVHS, and FISH. Opposition to fisheries regulations by the OFF were common and most often took the form of lobbying legislators and other power brokers, but also included legal challenges resolved in a court of law. However, more spontaneous movements that were not always endorsed by the OFF hierarchy did occur. One such example took place when the FMFC decided to implement an emergency rule which would put new mullet regulations into effect sooner than they would under normal circumstances. The FMFC wanted to have those regulations in place prior to the beginning of the Fall roe season so as to have an immediate reduction in harvest through a longer weekend closure and other restrictions. Because the Governor and cabinet had to approve all regulations produced by the FMFC, a coalition of commercial fishing groups formed a rally to protest the FMFC's action.

The rally took place in Tallahassee with a small protest march to the Capital building where the governor and cabinet were going to determine the outcome of the proposed emergency rule (Figure 6-3). The director of the FMFC proposed the emergency ruling and the Governor quickly got to the point as to whether there really was an emergency. The Attorney General questioned the director on the current rule and the status of the challenges. He said he did not seem to think that the industry was in danger of immediate collapse. He also said that he did not think the state could win a case for an emergency rule. The Secretary of Agriculture got loud applause when he said there was a need to focus on putting people to work, not out of work in these hard economic times. The cabinet defeated the motion for an emergency rule and the upcoming roe season would operate under current regulations.

Recreational fishing interest groups capitalized on the action of the Cabinet and the protest by fishermen to make it seem they were averse to any regulation and would resist unconditionally. This became a critical decision that according to some would ensure a "net ban" amendment would be on the upcoming ballot (Hill 1992).

The type of resistance characterized by the protest march was not the typical for commercial fishermen; in fact, many of the organizers were disappointed at the low turn out for the rally. This type of public display was usually reserved for FISH and CVHS. In fact, the Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage was formed during a controversy over the old Albion Inn that the Coast Guard razed in 1991 which became a very public protest. The hotel was the oldest building on Sarasota Bay, having withstood the 1920 hurricane and several other major storms. The Coast Guard purchased the property and had been housed there for about ten years. They had received funding for a new building and decided to build on the same property. FISH along with the CVHS opposed the destruction of the hotel and both organizations lobbied local, state and Federal agencies to stop the Coast Guard from tearing down the structure. They were unsuccessful, but were able salvage one part of the hotel referred to as Burton's Store (Figure 6-4). The store was actually older than the hotel and had become part of the hotel after years of renovation. The Coast Guard agreed to offer that part of the building to FISH. FISH negotiated with the A.P. Bell Fish Company to place the building on their property until funding and a site for the building became available.

In many ways, Burton's Store became a symbol of the struggle by those concerned with preserving the community's historic character. Although there were many within the village who opposed salvaging the structure, others saw it as a small victory in light

of the larger defeat of losing the Albion Inn. Over the next several years, Burton's Store would become more of an eyesore than a symbol, yet would remain standing across from the Coast Guard Station as a reminder of the community's resistance.



Figure 6-4. Burton's Store Located across from A.P. Bell Fish Company.

Other public protests followed as both FISH and CVHS were concerned with a plan by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to build a sixty-five foot high fixed-span bridge from Cortez to Anna Maria Island mentioned earlier. It was part of a larger FDOT plan to widen Cortez Road from Bradenton to the village and replace the drawbridge that was currently in place. The plan was supposed to relieve traffic congestion by removing the obstacle of the bridge as it stopped traffic every time it was raised to allow boaters to pass on the intercoastal waterway. During the winter when most seasonal residents have arrived and during the peak summer beach season, traffic backs up considerably when the drawbridge is raised. The steady stream of cars that follow the lowering of the bridge offers few breaks and can take several minutes to clear.

In addition, there were safety concerns that the FDOT had recognized and proposed through the removal of all drawbridges in Florida to facilitate evacuation during hurricanes. Once bridges are lowered during a hurricane evacuation, they are no longer raised to allow boats to move into safe harbor; so latecomers are left in dire straits.

The local Sarasota-Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) had approved the bridge in December of 1988, but neither the FDOT nor MPO held a public hearing in Cortez prior to deciding on the design. When challenged, they did hold a hearing in the village and found considerable resistance to the planned bridge. In contrast, the FDOT had prepared a well produced video showing several different bridge options for public hearings in Sarasota County to demonstrate the various impacts on the proposed bridge replacement from Sarasota to Long Boat Key. There were no videos for the Cortez Bridge, but then Cortez did not have oceanfront lots worth one million dollars for sale either.

Those who opposed the bridge considered its scale out of character with the area. Both Cortez and Anna Maria Island had zoning laws in place that restricted the height of buildings to three stories. Furthermore, the claim that the bridge would relieve traffic congestion was challenged because all traffic from Bradenton flowed into a T intersection with a stoplight for a two-lane road on the island. The opposition also felt that such a large bridge would encroach upon the character of the historic village of Cortez. Finally, there were environmental concerns about the impact of pilings and other disturbances to the waterway. The opposition won out in the end.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) voted February 24 to remove the proposed Cortez Bridge replacement from its five-year work plan. The action follows

several yeas of organized resistance to the replacement plan from residents and elected officials from Anna Maria Island and Cortez village (Editorial 1992a).

There was considerable optimism by those who had opposed the sixty-five foot high fixed-span bridge from Cortez to Anna Maria Island after it was removed from the five year plan. Some quietly commented, however, that it may have been taken off the five-year plan only to be put on the six-year plan. Nevertheless, there began plans for a "No Bridge Cruise" to be held on one of the local charter vessels that operated next to the bridge in Cortez.

Although it seemed to have the support of most villagers, comments by some residents later seemed to reflect differences of opinion that were not evident before the decision on the bridge. Several village residents, some commercial fishermen, felt that the new bridge might actually have been a good thing; that it would have alleviated traffic congestion and made it easier to cross Cortez road. Nevertheless, the bridge at Cortez would not be built and the fight over its placement and location now generated new resistance to the planned bridge replacement at the north end of Anna Maria Island.

Resistance of this type was commonly taken on by the organizations within the village and in a large part by women. The protest in Tallahassee was organized by a woman. The protests to the bridge and Albion Inn were lead by women from CVHS as were many of the anti-development protests and the anti-drug protests of the past. In fact, the OFF was started by a woman. This is in part, due to the fact that women spend more time on land than men. They have more opportunity to organize as they have access to communication tools and can get to places if needed. Women are also often the bookkeepers for households and therefore may develop organizational skills that

fishermen may not. All of these factors, to some degree, contribute to and can explain their presence in these public displays of resistance. Fishermen who spend most of their time on the water have developed a different form of resistance.

The resistance on the water was quite a different and would not be readily apparent, to those who are unfamiliar with fishermen and their communities. To illustrate my point a description of one fishing trip that I took in the early Spring with a local Cortez fisherman will provide a glimpse into the routine nature of this type of resistance.

At the time of the trip many fishermen were fishing for pompano using "set nets" which are placed close to the beach, perpendicular to the shoreline. This type of net is anchored at both ends and sinks to a foot or two below the waterline. Buoys mark both ends of the net, so that boaters might see them and avoid entangling their prop in the net hidden below the surface. On this particular night we had set our net near the beach and went to visit a friend who was fishing more than a few hundred yards away from us. We pulled our boat next to his and began to talk and eat our dinner. This is not unusual as fishermen often fish with kinfolk or friends and meet to talk or eat on the water. As we talked, both fishermen kept looking off toward the beach for the marine patrol and several times wondered whether a boat in the distance was just a boat or the Marine Patrol. After about an hour and a half, we returned to where we had placed the net, but were surprised to find it gone. After making sure that it had not moved with the current, it became apparent that law enforcement had confiscated the net. The Marine Fisheries Commission had recently passed a new regulation that required all nets be tended (close enough to monitor) and that fishermen could not be more than 100 yards away from their net when fishing. This fisherman was aware of this new tending rule and was well aware

that he was not within 100 yards, thus he kept looking for the Marine Patrol. He wondered later if he had been turned in by a property owner on the beach who might have called law enforcement. I heard the next day that he had been cited with a violation and would have to go to court and pay a fine to get his net back.

Other examples of such resistance were heard time and again. One evening while at home a fisherman stopped by to visit and told me several stories similar to the resistance described above. He was an officer in FISH and also the local OFF. I had been fishing with him before on a bait boat he crewed on and knew him well through the various projects we had worked on together. He asked if I had seen a recent letter in the Bradenton Herald from a disgruntled homeowner who claimed he had been threatened by commercial fishermen and was planning on turning in any commercial fishermen caught fishing in his canal. The fishermen told me that he had been ticketed in the canal two nights before. He obviously was a little sheepish about it and worried because he was an OFF officer and did not want to lose his position because of the infraction. He told me that he thought about it when they were in the canal, but was not sure what would happen.

He went on to tell me of exploits of several fishermen from Cortez. Because I told him I had been on the river with the marine patrol the other night, he began telling stories about fishing on the river. In one story a fisherman would go up the river late at night where it was illegal to fish commercially and net fish. Rather than risk being caught by the marine patrol he would haul the boat out of the water at a boat ramp up the river and trailer home. One night they evidently were stuck and could not avoid the marine patrol



so they had to leave the boat, net and everything. They reported it stolen and had it later returned.

In another instance, a fisherman was pulled over with a net full of fish in the river. The marine patrol asked him to dock the boat at a particular ramp. Evidently the patrolman started toward the ramp and the fisherman was to follow. When they got to the dock the net was no longer in the boat. The marine patrol asked what happened to his net. The fisherman said, "What net? I don't have any net." Evidently, he had thrown it out the back of the boat while the marine patrol was leading the way to the dock. His brother supposedly picked the net up later and had taken it home, fish and all.

These stories were not uncommon in the course of conversations with fishermen over time in the village. Even fishermen whom you would least expect would often have an account of outsmarting the marine patrol or some type of illicit fishing activity. Nevertheless, it became obvious that breaking rules was not unusual. It seemed to be an accepted part of the occupation, but may also have been part of a larger cultural feature shared by most villagers as I often heard remarks of disdain for government regulation, especially for building permits and such, which were thought of as an unnecessary burden.

This foot-dragging, false compliance and other evasive tactics used by fishermen in daily life are the "weapons of the weak" that Scott (1985) documented within peasant resistance. These attempts to gain some form of control over their work and lives are similar to those that peasants and others have used around the globe. Yet, fishermen also take part in other forms of protest that are not so covert and may often entail a good deal of coordination and planning, even challenging the bureaucracy. This mixed form of

social protest may be a representation of what Fox and Starn refer to as "in between" the large scale social movement and resistance (Fox and Starn 1997).

The resistance that I observed in Cortez was very familiar along other parts of the U.S. Gulf coast as mentioned previously with the Texas bay shrimpers. And certainly the offshore shrimpers studied by Dyer and Moberg (1992) or the North Carolina fishermen by Griffith (1999) all participate in this "in between" resistance. In fact, during my fieldwork in Texas in 1989, I watched the protest by Gulf shrimpers become a nationally televised event as they blockaded ports to protest the forced use of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) by the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS). That particular protest was Gulf wide and demonstrated a resistance that was capable of broad support throughout several states as shrimp fishermen from Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana and Texas all participated. They were unsuccessful in their attempt to stop this forced technological change as the NMFS was under formidable pressure from environmental groups to impose TED regulations in accordance with the Endangered Species Act. Yet, as Dyer and Moberg (1992) point out, the everyday resistance continued as fishermen sewed the opening shut to stop the loss of shrimp and prevent turtles from being excluded.

These forms of resistance, both the formal and the informal, are inextricably tied to class-cultural differences. These encounters with authority are opportunities for fishermen to express some autonomy over their work and life; autonomy that they see being reduced over time as increasing regulations continue to restrict their fishing. Resistance reinforces their sense of independence by giving them some say in the daily accomplishment of their work as they see these rules being imposed by outsiders, others

who do not have the same attachment to these waters that they embrace. Furthermore, fishing families of Cortez tend to organize around issues that are of immediate concern (i.e., Albion Inn or drawbridge to Anna Maria Island); common behavior for working class movements (Rose 1997). Whether it is the net ban campaign or government plans for building a bridge, the community organizes against outsiders who have challenged their interests. Outsiders are those who, for whatever reason, seem to be acting for their own advantage. Those who run both government and business are also outsiders and seem to be interested in their own personal gain (Rose 1997). Therefore commercial fishermen and their communities tend to perceive developers and government bureaucrats as strangers and may make little distinction between either. This is a familiar pattern as fishermen make little distinction between the different levels of governmental control over their resources. In many discussions they tend to lump local, state and federal government together making little distinction between which agency is responsible for which regulation or permit. Furthermore, when discussing the net ban campaign they often place government in the same group with net ban proponents.

These class-cultural differences are especially evident when examining the more formal resistance, but the informal resistance may be more deeply rooted in the culture of fishing, yet still reflect class differences. As discussed earlier in Chapter 2, the sense of injustice that peasants experience as their "right to subsist" is infringed upon by outsiders or the state described by Wolf (1969) is very much like what fishermen from Cortez and elsewhere undergo as they become pushed from traditional fishing grounds. Fishermen acknowledge that in some areas where canals have been built for housing developments, fish that would once gather together in the bay now go into the canals for shelter and are

inaccessible to them because of laws prohibiting their entry. They argued that dredging the canals changed fish behavior and they resent the fact that they are now prevented from going into the canals after them. Coastal development has changed the landscape and their access to fish:

But then the same thing happened up there in Anna Maria. Many seine fish have been caught between them piers and the people watched. Then they built some houses in there and the people who had the houses would run out there sayin' "shoo, get out of here. You can't fish here"....and all this kind of thing; like a bunch of chickens.<sup>4</sup>

Commercial fishermen do not see coastal development and changing fisheries regulations as isolated events.

It'll never....if the fishing goes, the big money people, the developers are doing everything they can to buy out Cortez. This is a prime location on the water. It's almost totally ... it's got water halfway around it and it's got the channels and everything it would take to make a monstrous big-time money situation for these high rises. And they would love to see us go down so they could make their millions.<sup>5</sup>

There are definite theories of conspiracy that fuel these feelings of injustice (Fritchey 1994; Maril 1995; Griffith 1999). Furthermore, the language becomes more of a moral language that places fishermen within the context of a much larger group of oppressed people:

They annihilated the Indian culture which now, they've restored it. They've annihilated all kinds of things, the Indian Mounds and stuff that were around Cortez. They've leveled it and put high rises on it. When are you gonna stop? When is there a stopping to all this mess? We've got plenty of property and there's land. Everybody don't have to live on the water. And when you armor the

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<sup>4</sup> Oral history interview with Alcee Taylor, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>5</sup> Oral history interview with Ray Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez, Florida.

shoreline you've lost anyhow. You've killed the nurseries for the baby fish to grow. It's just ridiculous.<sup>6</sup>

These feelings of injustice are part of what fuels the resistance on the water; a form of everyday resistance reminiscent of the everyday peasant resistance described by Scott (1985). These acts of defiance range from minor violations of gear rules, to major offenses such as fishing in closed areas or during time closures. But clearly this defiance reflects a sense of ownership by these fishermen; a "right to subsist." Much like the shrimp fishermen of Alabama (Dyer and Moberg 1992) who felt a "right to subsistence" and the fishermen of New Jersey who saw themselves as "dispossessed commoners," fishermen of Cortez view their historical rights to fish these waters as being threatened and those rights do not necessarily come from the authorities.

I think that the way they're going about it and looking down their nose at a people who have been and are proud people, we're very plain and ordinary.... We have a freedom that these folks are trying to take away from us that's not right. I think it's beyond just the Constitution. I think its God given.<sup>7</sup>

Although their detractors see this resistance as mere criminal behavior, it is more than that, and reflects many conflicting values of an encroaching urban society upon areas that were once geographically rural and may still be rural in their outlook (Forsyth, Gramling, and Wooddell 1998). Additionally, resistance is rarely an act of one; it often takes the coordinated efforts of a group and can have benefits for the community as a whole (Vasquez 1994). There was far more sympathy than criticism by village residents for a fisherman who was caught by the marine patrol in violation of some fishing

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<sup>6</sup> Oral history interview with Ray Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez, Florida.

<sup>7</sup> Oral history interview with Ray Pringle, Vanishing Culture Project, Florida Institute for Saltwater Heritage, Cortez, Florida.

regulation. Furthermore, if he was successful in bringing in a good catch, the better for the fish house and all the employees.

While there may be a certain benefit to resistance and it may be embedded within the culture, there were many who understood the important role that resistance, both formal and informal, played in forming the public image of commercial fishermen and their communities. Attempts by the OFF officers, both local and statewide, to reverse the image of outlaw that was so successfully used against them, were at the very center of a division within the statewide fishing organization and Cortez. In attempting to convince fishermen to buy into the fishery management process through lobbying efforts and deals to accept some regulation, the OFF generated opposition which considered their lobbying efforts to be pandering to government bureaucrats and other outsiders. While some fishermen considered the rational scientific management of fisheries to be an unavoidable future, others thought that it was more important to fight the increasing regulation of their work and refused to compromise.

At one of the first local OFF meetings I attended, a dispute arose when one member told the director, who was also an officer within the state-wide organization that he was tired of all the compromising they were doing with the state's Marine Fisheries Commission (FMFC). A few angry words were exchanged between the two fishermen before others spoke up diffusing the heated discussion. Later during the meeting, a matter concerning a letter that had recently been sent to OFF members statewide was brought up by the director. The letter accused him and other state officers of lavishly spending OFF money and jet-setting around the state like "playboys." It also referred to them as "wimps," "compromisers" and "stooges." Several members of the local chapter

immediately denied having anything to do with the letter, which some might have interpreted as a sign of guilt by implication. Others spoke to the issue of divisiveness and said that this was the last thing they needed, especially at a time when there was a push by certain groups within the recreational fishing sector to remove gillnets from state waters.

The dispute between these two factions would become an important source of tension within Cortez, but would also have implications for the parent OFF organization and other commercial fishing organizations throughout the state. The discord within the local chapter was indicative of a similar division statewide that would hamper efforts to combat the campaign to remove gillnets from state waters in the near future.

In early December of 1992 I attended a meeting of a new coalition formed to fight the net ban campaign. This coalition was primarily composed of fish dealers from around the state. Others had been invited to attend the meeting to serve in an advisory capacity. I had asked the manager of one Cortez fish house why they needed another organization. She expressed some frustration with the division between the state OFF and the Seafood Consumers and Producers Association (SCPA). The latter was a recent organization that was challenging new fisheries regulation through litigation. Her concern was that financially, fishermen were being asked to support two different campaigns to fight the net ban. She and other dealers thought another group should be formed which would bring all groups together to form a united front. That group would be called the Professional Fisheries Conservation Coalition (PFCC).

The PFCC had hired a political consultant who was introduced to the group and quickly pointed out that the FCA would be successful in their petition drive. He said that

private firms can guarantee a successful petition drive in 120 days if necessary but would charge 1.5 million dollars to complete it. He pointed out that the FCA would not spend that much money for a petition drive, but instead would take longer to gather the necessary signatures. Nevertheless, they would be successful. He also cautioned the group about hiring a Public Relations firm to address their image saying they would spend a great deal of money, yet accomplish little. His focus was going to be on a television ad campaign to combat the initiative once it made it to the ballot.

This approach caused some concern among some of those present, especially, the OFF. The Cortez director and the state director both argued that slowing the petition drive was an important component. The consultant for the PFCC countered that they would be unsuccessful in stopping the petition and should concentrate on the ballot initiative. He went on to say that they needed to get more ethnic groups involved with the campaign against the net ban, especially Blacks and Hispanics.

The attempt at unifying all fishing organizations was unsuccessful as evidenced when the officers of the State OFF organization scheduled a meeting in mid-January 1994. The meeting was held in a Bradenton hotel to introduce the "Save Our Seafood" campaign. The name was purposely chosen to create confusion among the public as it would have the same acronym as the Save Our Sealife campaign. There were approximately 30 people in attendance, but surprisingly there were no media present.

The OFF had hired a public relations firm to draw out the petition drive and hopefully drain the Save Our Sealife funds, preventing them from gathering enough signatures. This strategy was in direct contrast to that of the PFCC that had decided to raise money for a large advertising campaign just prior to the vote on the ballot initiative.



The consultant heading up the PFCC campaign had earlier stated in his opinion that any effort to stop the petition drive would be useless as he was convinced the Save our Sealife campaign would get enough signatures. Nevertheless, the OFF campaign was already in progress. Several executive officers had been traveling the state visiting the editors of most major newspapers making the case for commercial net fishing, despite the fact that most had already printed feature stories supportive of the net ban campaign.<sup>8</sup> In addition, the director of OFF stated they were pursuing a bill that would require the recreational fishing sector to fund a buyout of the commercial net fishermen if the initiative were to pass. All in all most in attendance were impressed and thought it was a good strategy. The fact that they were now competing directly with the PFCC for funds did not seem to concern anyone at the time.

There continued to be a strict division between the two commercial fishing groups; the compromisers and non-compromisers. As both groups pursued their strategies fishermen, families and friends around the state were being asked to divide their loyalties and donations between several different campaigns to fight the net ban. There was no concerted effort or plan and several individuals were taking it upon themselves to develop their own advertising campaigns. Several restaurant owners were printing placemats that defended the commercial fishing industry offering statistics on landings that showed, for many species, it was the recreational sector that landed the most.

Resistance is an important part of the culture of fishing and has significant implications for the commercial fishermen of Cortez and their community. While

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<sup>8</sup> The Gainesville Sun (September 12, 1993) had published a featured piece on the net ban in the Issues section "Commercial fishing nets catching flak" that was highly disparaging toward the commercial fishing industry. Later, just prior to the ballot vote, the editorial staff came out against the net ban proposal (Gainesville Sun November 1, 1994).

resistance reinforces a strong sense of independence and autonomy within their work and lives, it did not reflect the image of the beloved hero of the West or strong silent type on the margins of society that was discussed earlier through the work of Agar (1986) and his work with independent truckers or Bellah et al. (1985) and their look at American attitude toward independence. The image that resonated with the general public was much different. And while fishermen and their families recognized the disconnect with the public's perception, they envisioned yet another image more aligned with the oppressed, like American Indians being pushed off their land. Instead, the image that resistance portrayed during the net ban campaign was one of outlaw and destroyer of the resource; an image that would be fatal in terms of combating the net ban campaign.

## CHAPTER 7 EPILOGUE AND CONCLUSION

### **Epilogue**

After leaving the village I stayed in close contact with the FISH and many of those families who brought me into their family while in the village. I began to write several editorials to the local paper in Gainesville critical of the net ban campaign as part of an effort to inform the public. I was also involved in the organizing of a proposed debate on the campus of the University of Florida sponsored by the Anthropology Department. Because of my recent letter writing campaign I thought it would be best if I were not openly involved in any publicity of the debate. I asked another anthropology student to take the lead.

Contact was made with potential speakers from both the commercial fishing and the recreational fishing lobbies. Originally, a panel of moderators was to be chosen which included academics with experience in maritime issues in Florida and an environmental writer from the Gainesville Sun. The list was submitted to both sides of the debate and they were invited to participate at that time. The recreational representatives refused to take part. An article in the Gainesville Sun (Tucker 1994) chronicling the turn of events generated letters to the editor critical of the entire process (Bowles 1994). Comments were made that suggested panel members were partial to the commercial fishing industry or had no experience in these issues and therefore gave the recreational sector good reason to not participate. However, panel members had well

documented experience with fisheries management of both commercial and recreational fisheries and most of the critique was hyperbole.

After discussions with those involved in organizing the event, it was determined to go ahead with a forum format where speakers would address the audience and then have a question and answer period. Shortly after it became known that we intended to go ahead with the forum arrangement with only the commercial side present, the Department of Anthropology began to receive a number of phone calls. Many of these phone calls were from recreational fishermen who were critical of the department saying it was a one-sided debate. However, when asked to participate, they always refused.

One phone call from the State Comptroller's office was particularly disconcerting. The official who called asked whether state funds had been used to set up the event. I told him that I did not know and would get back to him. He told me that if there were state funds used, he would likely have to conduct an investigation and indicated that it may be illegal for the department to use state funds for such an event. After talking with the Department Chair it was determined that state funds were not being used and that we would go forward with the event. I called the official and told him of our decision. He warned me again that state funds should not be used and that they may still have to investigate this incident.

The forum was held on November 3<sup>rd</sup> at 7:00 pm at the Reitz Union on the University of Florida Campus sponsored by the Department of Anthropology and Food and Resource Economics. A representatives from the Organized Fishermen of Florida and Southeastern Fisheries each gave presentations and then answered questions from the audience of approximately 50 people in attendance.

If, in fact, it was net ban supporters that generated the call by the Comptroller General to dissuade us from holding our forum on such short notice could be another sign of the power differential that the fishermen were facing. Further evidence of the political connections of the SOS campaign was clear when they were able to schedule another episode of the Florida Crossroads series to debate the net ban several months after the original episode had aired. The net ban coalition was very bothered by the initial episode of Florida Crossroads as they considered it too one-sided in favor of the commercial fishing industry. Because of their objections, and some likely political arm-twisting, the producers agreed to do another segment with a different format. The second segment was a debate between the commercial and recreational sectors. The participants for the commercial side were the director of the Cortez OFF and the consultant with the SCPA. For the recreational side an officer of the FCA and the director of the Florida League of Anglers. The debate took place in September of 1993.

The commercial fishing industry was politically connected, but not that well connected. They relied on political connections to local representatives who still held some empathy for the working class fishermen, but they were becoming few and far between. They were also counting on that same empathy which the governor and his cabinet seem to hold, but that would also change with a new election.

The idea that there was credible scientific evidence for the net ban was repeatedly challenged by the commercial fishing industry. Florida Sea Grant had considered developing fact sheets on various species of fish that were both recreational and commercially important. These fact sheets were to include landings information for both sectors. However, after soliciting comments on the fact sheets from both sides, the

recreational sector protested that the fact sheets were too favorable toward the commercial sector and the plan was abandoned.<sup>1</sup> The fact sheets are a common publication format for various types of information and in this case would have compared recreational and commercial landings of different species. Data at that time indicated that the recreational catch for many species was often greater than that taken by the commercial sector as mentioned before.

This is an important example of how certain information was suppressed during the campaign to ban nets. While the SOS campaign was successful in their use of misinformation (i.e., number of porpoise deaths by small-scale gill nets, by-catch in the gill net fishery, stock depletion, etc.) the commercial side had little or no success in getting factual information about their fishing activity to the forefront. This was in part due to the ability of the SOS campaign to use effective images which can have far more appeal than statistics or graphs. It is hard to find an evocative image for landings of fish.

The scientific community was relatively silent on the entire issue during the campaign and it was only after the passage of the amendment that some members did speak out against the amendment and contradict some of the claims of the SOS campaign. In fact, one of the state's preeminent stock assessment scientists stated that regulations were in place prior to the net ban that would have brought mullet out of the overfished status within the next two years (Savage 1995).

The supporters of the net ban campaign circulated a "white paper" that supposedly provided a social and economic assessment of the proposed initiative which attempted to draw conclusions about the anticipated impacts of a net ban in Florida through a

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<sup>1</sup> Personal communication with Jay Humphries, Florida Sea Grant.

comparison of the impacts in Texas (Ditton 1994). The paper emphasized a limited impact upon the commercial industry if a net ban were implemented and pointed to a beneficial impact from an increased recreational fishing economy as a result. The difficulty with those claims was that there was no scientific evidence from Texas since there had been no social or economic impact research whatsoever conducted to determine the impacts of a net ban there. In addition, the economic figures that were used to argue for an increased benefit from recreational fishing were not comparable to those that supposedly demonstrated a much less valuable commercial fishery. Still the argument was put forth as sufficient reason to support the net ban campaign.

Prior to the vote on the constitutional amendments, some agencies passed proclamations in support of the commercial fishing industry and opposing the net ban amendment. On September 27<sup>th</sup>, the Gulf of Mexico Fishery Management Council which manages fisheries in federal waters sent a letter to the Governor of Florida in which the Council proclaimed that the net ban amendment had not been "evaluated on the basis of scientific information through the appropriate fishery management agencies." Manatee County passed a resolution in support of the fishing industry of Cortez Village on September 13<sup>th</sup>. The proclamation pointed out the important economic value of the commercial fishing industry to the county as well as their efforts to restore wetlands.

The amendment to restrict gill net fishing in state waters was on the ballot for the November 8<sup>th</sup> election in 1994. The voters in the state approved the amendment with an overwhelming majority of over 70 percent. The commercial fishing industry was left in shambles, unable to fathom such a defeat. The regulations prohibiting entangle gill nets would become effective in July 1, 1995.

### **Post Net Ban**

After the net ban became effective, the state began a series of projects to help alleviate the impacts. So called, one-stops were set up where fishing families could find out about the various different programs that were available for assistance. A net buy-back program was initiated to buy back gillnets that were now illegal in state waters. The program came under fire as some fishermen began to acquire substantial amounts of money from nets that may or may not have been used previously in the mullet fishery (Bergstrom 1995).

Additionally, the state began an intensive enforcement program to ensure that fishermen were not going to continue to use gillnets (Morrissey 1995). As time went on, more and more regulations were written to ensure the net ban would be effective. Fishermen, on the other hand, began using various modified nets to circumvent the laws, attempting numerous different adaptations of the 500 square foot mesh designation desperately trying to maintain some type of net fishery. All the while, legal challenges were being filed trying to overturn the amendment (Morrissey 1995a; Voyles 1997) and some fishermen continued to use illegal nets (Kelly 2002).

It was not clear what the costs of implementing the net ban would be. Some speculation placed the price tag as high as \$25 million (Editorial 1995). Although there was no baseline research conducted to measure the impact of the net ban on fishing families, earlier research conducted by Smith (1995) and a follow-up study conducted in 1997-98 was able to capture some impacts (Smith et al. 2003). The research showed that there were significant mental health impacts for both husbands and wives as they perceived increased stress and depression as a result of the net ban. Furthermore, the research also showed that there were distinct differences in how both husbands and wives



experienced and coped with these mental health impacts. These types of mental health impacts have been documented before among shrimp fishermen in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico as they faced increasing regulation of their fishery (Johnson et al. 1998). This certainly brings into question how fisheries managers measure the impacts of their regulations when they tend to focus on fishermen and the firm, when it is more likely a family business organized around a household (Durrenberger 1994) and rarely do they have ways of documenting these types of social impacts.

While the research did document important traumas suffered by many families, those who were able to remain fishing appeared resilient and were able to cope effectively with the net ban. However, because the study considered only married couples, those who may have divorced as a result of the net ban were not included. Neither were those families who moved as a result. Of the original 95 families studied 68 remained intact still residing in Florida. Of those remaining, 44 were included in the follow-up study. It is difficult to measure the entire impact of the net ban on Florida's fishing families with no baseline to compare the present situation. While the cost may not have been near \$25 million, it is clear that costs were considerable and for fishing families, the costs may continue to increase as they switch to other fisheries which in turn may require further regulation and dealers attempt to adapt to changing markets.

In terms of the impacts on the commercial fishing industry, Table 7-1 shows that for the species selected there was a rather dramatic drop in landings, effort and dockside value. These declines correspond with similar declines in the number of fishermen fishing for mullet, spotted sea trout and pompano. However, if the intended effect of the net ban was to improve the status of all of these finfish, the benefits are unclear. Stock

status for mullet has improved, but was improving prior to the net ban as mentioned earlier. For other species like bluefish, spotted sea trout and pompano, the effect of the net ban is uncertain for overfishing still occurs and may be a result of increased recreational or commercial harvest. Spanish mackerel have recovered and are no longer overfished since the net ban.

Table 7-1. Percentage Change in Average Annual Florida Commercial Landings, Effort and Dockside Value for Selected Species after the Net Ban.

Species	Landings	Effort	Dockside Value
Mullet	-60%	-48%	-49%
Spotted Sea Trout	-91%	-91%	-86%
Spanish Mackerel	-56%	-68%	-39%
Bluefish	-76%	-68%	-71%
Sheepshead	-68%	-63%	-45%
Pompano	-6%	-61%	-19%

Source: Adams et al. 1999

However, one of the many impacts from the net ban is the shifting of effort. Once unable to continue fishing entanglement gear, many commercial fishermen switched to other species like blue crab or fished offshore for species like shark and grouper. This additional effort places new species under stress creating the need for more regulation to contain effort in these fisheries.

For Cortez, the impact has been a steady and gradual change. The local OFF chapter is practically nonexistent. The former director has become a truck driver and no longer fishes for a living. The statewide OFF has seen a dramatic decrease in membership. Other fishing organizations have sprung up in its place as the former president of the local chapter has started anew in the Panhandle. The CVHS continues its preservation efforts as the director continues to persevere and was able to complete the National Register Project which culminated in the historic village being placed on the National Register of Historic places. She continues to fight for a location for Burton's

store which remains across from the AP Bell fish house; although the FISH voted to move the building within five years or destroy it in 1999. The FISH director sold his house and moved back to Baltimore. The organization continues to grow under the leadership of the former OFF secretary and manager of a fish house. The organization was instrumental in getting Cortez designated a Florida Waterfronts Community with the support of the County. FISH had acquired the old volunteer fire house from the fire district as Cortez no longer had a volunteer fire department. The old fire house became the community center and offices for the Florida Waterfront's project. The Florida Waterfronts program was designed to help communities revitalize their waterfront by providing seed money to develop programs to address local issues of economic redevelopment.



Figure 7-1. Old Schoolhouse at West End of Village.

The county purchased the old school house at the west end of the village with plans to convert it to a community center (Figure 7-1). Furthermore, the county has recently

hired a community organizer to assist the village with its endeavors to bring the community center to fruition.

FISH on its own has recently purchased land adjacent to the school that was designated sensitive and part of a contingency plan through which the school house was purchased. The monies from the fishing festival are now controlled by FISH and stay within the village and have provided most of the funds for land purchases, although donations contribute a significant portion. In addition, the organization has been recognized recently by several different conservation and preservation organizations and has received cash awards.

The former Neriah Taylor boatworks was chosen for the location of filming for the movie "Great Expectations" with Robert DiNero. The house was featured in the movie as the home of the fisherman uncle with several scenes from inside the home. Neriah's son Alcee continues to act as curator of the small museum (Figure 7-2).



Figure 7-2. Taylor Boatworks.

The Bayshore fish house was purchased by a local Cortez fisherman who now operates his bait fishing vessel and others along with a retail market and a restaurant. In addition, he has recently purchased the former Horizon restaurant that sits across the canal and is opening a second restaurant.

The Sigma fish house closed shortly after the net ban was implemented and moved all operations to its St. Petersburg headquarters. The fish house has subsequently been purchased by a wealthy Sarasota businessman who plans on building luxury sailboats. His plans include several waterfront condos and possibly luxury apartments or "boatels." Several residents are in the process of planning resistance to the development.

### **Conclusion**

The overwhelming support for the "net ban" amendment confused many commercial fishermen and their families. They just did not understand how so many people could be persuaded to vote for such a devastating amendment. What they did not understand was that in the most heavily populated areas of Florida, the majority of voters had little knowledge of the commercial fishing industry. The image that the SOS campaign was able to present through their efforts and the wording on the ballot made the issue seem to be one of conservation and good for the environment. In contrast, the commercial fishing industry was unable to put forward any distinct image that was either powerful or pervasive enough to change that perception. This was in part due to the difference in the amount of financial resources each group controlled with the recreational sector spending a far greater amount than the commercial sector throughout the campaign. However, the commercial fishing industry had also splintered into several different factions, each with a different approach to fighting the SOS campaign which

greatly hampered their efforts to counter with a strong image with which voters could identify.

That image of resistance used so successfully by the SOS campaign was in some ways influenced by the changing role of science in fisheries management. Where once fishermen were sought out for their knowledge of the resource, over time fisheries management had come to rely more on scientific models to measure stock status. With this shift not only did fishermen lose influence, but their knowledge and comprehension of how management decisions were being made was also undermined. It required higher education and understanding of scientific processes few fishermen possessed. The language of stock assessments had little resemblance to their traditional knowledge of the fishery. These were becoming two very different cultural models of how the environment works. There was an inherent conflict as they came together in management forums that were based partly on a communication breakdown as two different regimes of nature were being presented. The political ecology of fisheries management was becoming a process dominated by scientists and professionals who spoke a different language, one of Spawning Potentials Ratios (SPR) and mortality rates; all part of the rational scientific process. Therefore, any questions as to the efficacy of the models or process were dismissed as resistance.

In many ways what was occurring in Cortez, was a model for what was happening statewide to fishermen, their families and their communities. The "growth machine" responsible for developing Florida's coast had been putting pressure on the resident's of fishing communities through higher property values and taxes as the coastal populations grew. In addition, a demographic shift was occurring as a result of this population

growth and the general populace of Florida now held values much different than those whom were born and raised on its shorelines. The net ban campaign capitalized on those differences and relied more on those who held a more urban outlook and who far outnumbered those who might have empathy and identify with the more rural or pastoral vision of Cortez.

During the net ban campaign it was difficult for FISH and CVHS to accomplish many of their goals as the image being proffered by the net ban campaign was having some spillover effect into other aspects village life. Both state and local politics were being influenced by the powerful recreational lobby and anything that favored commercial fishing was seen as a potential target for retribution. Therefore, many potential funding sources were reluctant to offer any support. But, another critical point was the lack of a unified voice coming from Cortez as a result of the division between FISH and CVHS. The appropriated image of Cortez often differed between these two organizations which made consensus difficult to attain, thereby putting forth a questionable image of the community.

Division among fishermen was a major problem, as both the local and the statewide organizations splintered during a critical point in time. If ever there was a time for them to remain united, it was during the campaign to take away their livelihood. Although the OFF had a long history of effective lobbying, it was unprepared for the scope of the campaign to ban nets. Joining with other commercial fishing organizations presented its own problems as the commercial fishing industry overall was divided by gear types and between producers and distributors. There was no single voice for the commercial fishing industry to counter the very strong and unified voice coming from their detractors.



The various forms of resistance that were once a source of pride for many Cortesians now became a liability. Their resistance had served them well in the past, insulating them from many of the intrusions that other coastal fishing communities were unable to avoid. But, as they continued to challenge intrusions both on land and on the water, their claims of injustice were not seen as valid. Resistance was immoral and self-serving, far from the image that Cortesians had steeped themselves in for generations.

Characterizing commercial fishermen's resistance as immoral and self-serving is common within the many conflicts around the world between people who fear being displaced and those who promote development or conservation (Oliver-Smith 2002). If those who are to be displaced do not go willingly, then their forced ouster must be justified. In the net ban campaign, commercial fishermen were portrayed as lawbreakers and poor stewards of the environment. In the eyes of their detractors, commercial fishermen needed to be removed from inshore waters. Resistance was then seen as further evidence of their bad behavior.

Throughout the events that surrounded the campaign to ban nets in Florida, I continually reflected upon my experience in other fishing communities for it seemed to me that there was a constant struggle wherever I went. That struggle is the same, no matter where it takes place, as change is continuous for most coastal fishing communities. Granted these types of natural resource communities have familiarity with the seasonal and sometimes unforeseen changes in their environment. Fishermen, their families and communities must continually adapt to shifting patterns of resource availability and seasonal climate change. Now they must adapt to shifting patterns of



demographic change and political climate. But the question remains as to whether they can adapt to such change and still remain a fishing community.

Coastal areas are where sea meets the land and freshwater merges with saltwater; a place where one peers out over the ocean and wonders what is beyond and below or where fishermen catch their first glimpse of land after a long fishing trip. Here is a transitional stage from one very stable environment to another that is rather unstable. The uncertainty, the unknown, the constant change seems to lure many to these places of rising tides, shifting sands and constant breezes, and in so doing adds further to their dynamic character.

Coastalscapes, as they might be called, act as the interface between seascape, landscape and humanscape. Those who work and live in these environments have historically adapted to both land and sea utilizing resources from both environs. Coping with an ever-changing environment, coastal inhabitants become adept opportunists, taking advantage of seasonal variations in climate and resources.

In adapting to these coastalscapes fishermen have developed certain cultural features that have allowed them to survive and in some cases prosper within their communities. However, whether those cultural adaptations will continue to provide them with the necessary means to survive may be questionable. Historic and recent changes have proved troublesome to many long-term coastal inhabitants preventing them from being able to follow their historical patterns of adaptation and way of life.

In developing a strong sense of place attachment through years of fishing and living in this area, Cortez fishermen created an enclave that no longer fits well with its surrounding social environment. They have fashioned an identity that resembles a more

traditional and dated image that is not compatible with the redefinition of the resources upon which they depend. In competition for those resources, that negative image severely hindered their ability to retain their place in the political arena. Whether that changing image or loss of power was responsible or not, a division formed among the various commercial fishing interests at a time when they needed a united front to combat the net ban campaign. That division formed between a group that favored continued resistance on the water and less bargaining in the management forum; while the other faction saw a distinct need to pursue the challenges in the political arena and a need to "clean up their image" on the water.

As pointed out earlier, when self-image is in doubt, others are able to manipulate that image to match their own objective. This is exactly what happened to the commercial fishermen in Cortez and in the larger State of Florida as outdoor writers and recreational interests fashioned an identity in the media that would ensure the passage of the net ban initiative. That changing image associated with the resource was just one sign of a larger change in the power relations between fishermen, their communities, political opponents and other interest groups in the state that favor increasing tourism and recreational fishing. That change has been evolving as fishing communities lose their rural character with the rapidly encroaching urban sprawl.

With increasing regulation and incursions into their community Cortez fishermen and their families continued to participate in acceptable forms of resistance, contesting tourism development and fisheries management through bureaucratic challenges and political maneuvering. However, their ability to succeed, as in the past, has been

impaired because of the changing power relations and the increasing sophistication with which fisheries management has turned to scientific stock assessment.

Fishermen no longer fish in isolated estuaries and bays hidden away from the rest of the world. Most of their shoreline is now developed and therefore they are more visible as more and more people are on the water. Their ability to continue with covert resistance on the water has become increasingly more difficult. Fishermen must now compete with a growing tourism and recreational sector moving closer and closer to their doorstep.

The definition of the resource has changed to accommodate the growing coastal population. That growth is not only in numbers but also, also in political clout. State legislators, along with county and city commissioners, have begun to accommodate that political force and are less inclined to accommodate commercial fishermen and their communities.

The scientific discourse over fishery management has become increasingly more sophisticated and less comprehensible by fishermen. Where management once depended upon fishermen for information, they now rely upon complicated sampling techniques and complex models of the scientific approach. Terminology changes so quickly that fishermen have little chance to learn the old before new ones are introduced.

Cortez is a mere representation of these changes that seem to grow as rapidly as the population surrounding it. The attachment to a more rural lifestyle tied to a culture of fishing and identity are increasingly mismatched with the surroundings and cannot keep pace. Their resistance continues to play a prominent role in daily life as it has been rumored that some still use gill nets and they continue to fight the bureaucratic battles

with state and local governments (Kelly 2002). But that resistance cannot last long as they have fewer and fewer places from which to conceal themselves away from the view of the surrounding population. As Griffith points out, it may be that very nature of fishermen whose "very strength is also a source of weakness. As deeply as their roots reach into the estuary's gifts, their failure may lie in the everyday nature of their resistance...." (Griffith 1999:181).

By placing Cortez and the recent events into the context of a natural resource community and examining the culture of resistance I hope that this example reveals the complexity of human behavior such that it becomes obvious to fisheries managers and others that reaction to imposed regulations is not just a matter of breaking the law. There are often strong cultural ties and identity maintenance that drive these behaviors. Whether these kinds of behaviors can continue to coexist with the changing coastalscapes will remain to be seen.

APPENDIX  
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

HOUSEHOLD

Informant's name, present address, year of birth, marital status, year of marriage, birthplace.

Parents' names and ages? Mother's maiden name. Where do they live now?

How many brothers and sisters? Ages? Where are they now?

Both grandparents' name and residence?

Children's names and ages?

Father's and mother's occupational history? Was either unemployed at any time.

How long did you live in the house where you were born? Where and when did you move? Do you remember why these moves were made?

Can you tell me where the first house you lived in Cortez was located? Is it still in here?

How many rooms were in the house?

How it was furnished? Did you have enough beds, chairs, etc.

Did anyone other than your parents and brothers and sisters live in the house?

Who was in charge of household chores, cleanup and such?

Did your father help with household chores?

How did your mother spend most of her day?

Where did she spend most of her time?

Did she have any certain part of the house that was considered her territory?

What about your father, was their a part of the house that he spent most of his time?

Did you have daily tasks that you were required to do?

Were you expected to go to bed at a certain time?

Did you have your own bedroom/bed?

What about your brothers and sisters, did they have their own rooms?

## MEALS

Where did the family have their meals?

Who did the cooking?

When did you have breakfast? Who was present? Do you remember anything in particular that you ate for breakfast when you were young?

Did you have anything different on certain days (Sundays)?

Did your mother or father bake bread or other things?

Did your parents keep a vegetable garden?

Did your parents keep any livestock?

Did your father do any hunting for food?

Did you eat a lot of fish?

How was it prepared? Who prepared it?

Were you allowed to talk during meals?

What was your parent's attitude about leaving food on the plate?

Do you remember your mother having less food so the family could have more?

## RELATIONSHIPS

Was your mother an easy person to talk to?

Did she show affection?

If you had any worries could you share them with her?

Was your father an easy person to talk to?

Did he show affection?

If you had any worries could you share them with him?

As a child was there any older person that you felt more comfortable with than your parents?

When grown-ups were talking, were you allowed to join in?

If you did something that your parents disapproved of, what would happen?

If you were punished, by whom?

Ever by another parent?

Would you say that you received ideas about how to behave from your parents? Either one in particular?

#### FAMILY ACTIVITY

What were some of the holidays that you celebrated in your home?

How were they special, did you do anything different?

Did you have any musical instruments in the home?

Who played what?

Did you make music together as a family?

Were there family or neighborhood get togethers when you were growing up?

Did you ever take vacations when you were young? Where would you go?

Were your parents religious people?

Did they attend a particular church?

How often?

Did you take part in church activities when you were young?

What other activities organized by the church did you take part in?

Did you say prayers before you went to bed at night?

Did you ever say family prayers?

How much would you say religion meant to you as a child?

#### POLITICS and SUCH

Was your father interested in politics?

In what ways was he active in politics?

What political party did he support?

Was your father active in the fishing union movement?

When your parents weren't working, how did they spend their time?

Did your mother have any interests outside the home?

Did your father attend any clubs or pubs?

Did your father like sports?

#### CHILDHOOD

As a child who did you play with?

Did you have a special group of friends?

What games did you play?

Did boys and girls play the same games together?

As a child, did you have any hobbies?

#### COMMUNITY and SOCIAL CLASS

Did your parents socialize much when you were growing up?

With who? Relatives or friends?

Did they entertain at home?



Did people call casually, without an invitation? Who would?

When you were young, were you taught to treat any group differently from another (like blacks for instance)?

How were you taught to address adults? Mr., Mrs. Ma'am.

What are your first memories of school? Where was that?

How did you feel about school, teachers?

What was taught or emphasized in the school?

How old were you when you left school?

### WORK (FISHING)

What was your first job after leaving school?

If fishing, did you have your own boat or fish with someone else? (Who did you fish with?)

What type of fishing did you do?

What do you remember most about those early days of fishing?

What types of boats were you fishing?

What types of motors?

Who built them?

Do you recall any women fishers in Cortez?

Do you know of any women fishers in Cortez, today?

Do you recall any myths or superstitions about women and fishing?

In what ways is Cortez different from other communities?

Do you feel there is a sense of community here?

What buildings or places in Cortez symbolize the community?

What is the most important change that you have witnessed in Cortez? When did it take place?

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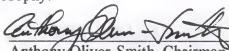
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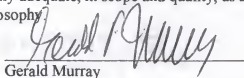
## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Michael Jepson was born and raised in West Liberty, Iowa and served in the U.S. Navy from 1972-1975. He received his Bachelor of Science in sociology from Northeast Missouri State University (now Truman State). His Master of Arts in anthropology was received in 1987 at the University of Missouri. He entered the doctoral program in anthropology at the University of Florida in 1989. Mr. Jepson's work has focused on fisheries management, fishermen and their families and communities. He was the first social scientist (non-economist) to serve as technical staff on a Regional Fishery Management Council in the United States when he was hired by the South Atlantic Fishery Management Council in 1994. His work has continued with a specific focus on identifying fishing communities in both the U.S. South Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

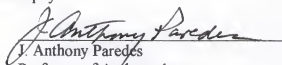
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Anthony Oliver-Smith, Chairman  
Professor of Anthropology


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Gerald Murray  
Associate Professor of Anthropology

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Anthony Paredes  
Professor of Anthropology

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
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